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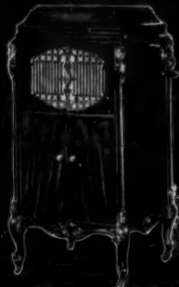
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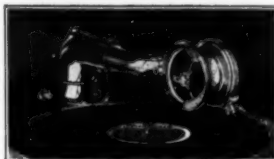
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The Magazine That Entertains

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AINSLEE'S

VOL. XLV.

JUNE—JULY, 1920.

No. 5.

Sleeping Fire

By Josephine A. Meyer

Author of "Her Own Kind,"
"Back of the Foots," etc.



CHAPTER I.

THE rain had been beating against the windows of the bus all the way downtown, but now, as it swung with a cumbersome lurch into Washington Square, a heavier blast of pelting wet and wind assailed it.

Two people had arisen to alight, a man and a woman. He had been seated near the front and was almost the length of the bus behind her in making his exit. The curve, the slippery road, and the blinding gust of wind combined to cause the heavy wheels to skid, and the vehicle stopped with a sort of drunken jolt. The woman was thrown first forward, then sideways.

The man noted, with a disapproval hard to fathom, that she had little sense of balance. Also, that, although not stout, she was noticeably rounded and soft, a fact that her rich, snugly fitting tailor-made suit made palpable. Her hat was knocked slightly awry, which drew his attention to it, and he saw that it was a large, dressy hat, out of keeping with her suit, and that the hair under it was of a blondness which is rarely natural after one has passed one's

twelfth year. She wore large, flat, pearl earrings, and the pinkness of the curve of cheek, which was visible, had in it a violet tinge that proclaimed it more permanent than her present embarrassment.

She had emitted little shrieks of apology and protest, and now she laughed, a deep, chuckling, infectious, whole-hearted laugh which lighted a smile on the faces of all the passengers except the man who stood behind her, blocked by her in his attempt to get out. In his eyes her laugh roused a curious expression, startled and attentive.

"Oh, I beg pardon—you want to pass. Well, of all— It's Hugh Morri-ver!"

She had turned and looked straight at him, and in recognizing him she was openly amazed and delighted, as if she had prayed hopelessly all her life for this particular occasion.

His severe, clear-cut face seemed to lose some of its haughty distinction in the flood of red which rose under his skin and blurred his features.

"Do you get out here?" he mumbled hastily.

"Yes, of course. I live here. Don't tell me you do, too! After all these months—this is the first time——"

"Allow me to share my umbrella with you." He gripped her firmly by her plump forearm and resolutely piloted her past the growing impatience of the conductor, down the broad step, across the shining sheet of dazzling black asphalt, to the curb. There, he managed, with a struggle, to hoist an unwilling umbrella, feeling some relief when the lights of the bus withdrew their impertinent and intolerable glare.

"It was a surprise, meeting you," he said perfunctorily.

"I've lived here since last November. That's—let's see—December, January, February—over four months ago. And so you live here, too! Since When?"

"Ever since I was born."

"What do you know about that? I always thought of you living uptown—in one of those swell places on Fifth Avenue opposite the park. That is—after I knew there was such places. Lord! Hugh! I can't believe it's you, and yet I'd known you anywheres. It's—it's all of twenty years ago, Hughie! Are you married?"

"No."

He alone appeared conscious, and, therefore, doubly conscious, to make up for her obliviousness, that they were standing unsheltered under an inadequate umbrella, lashed by foamlike swirls of driven rain.

"An old batch, Hugh?"

"I'm engaged."

"Only engaged?" She laughed again, that profound and hearty burst of spontaneous mirth. "My, but you're slow, Hughie! I'm a widow!"

All he could think of to say was "I'm sorry," which sounded utterly fatuous in the light of her cheerfulness. Yet it was her levity which should have sounded fatuous, if not reprehensible.

"My heavens! He ought to have been glad to go! He was seventy-six when

he died, a year ago. Say"—she nudged him smartly—"you ought to remember him—it was old man Binney, down to Brightsville. The miller, Lem Binney. I'm Mrs. Lem Binney, the fourth, and last. Oh, sure you must remember him! Some of the boys used to call him Bluebeard."

"Yes, I remember him," answered Hugh constrainedly.

"An oldish man, and rich when I married him, and richer when he died. I brought him luck. He invested in an invention by a young fellow named Gallo-way. He's rich, too, and married now. Ah, well—— But I was good to Lem, and straight. And he was right fond of me! We have a daughter, Irene. She's living with me. She's almost as old now as I was when you came to Shadow Lake that summer. Nearly eighteen. Can you beat it? It seems like yesterday."

"You have—a daughter?" repeated Hugh in what he felt to be stupid tones. He was annoyed to find his breath came short, and was dumfounded at her open, easy notice of it.

"Yes, Irene Binney. Oh, but I did like Lem Binney! He wasn't afraid of God or devil to his dying day. I don't say I didn't marry to stop talk, but it wasn't about you they was talking. I guess, after all, you've forgotten Lily Gropper. Sometimes I'm reconciled to the thought that Irene is no more like me than a nigger. Oh, she ain't bad looking! You haven't changed. I used to think you were the handsomest man in the world!"

They had crossed the Square to the west side, led by her almost imperceptible pilotage. Now she laid her hand on Hugh's arm, and stood still.

"I live here," she said. They stood before a conspicuously artistic apartment with a brightly lighted entrance. "Come in," she urged.

He had no desire to go in; he had every wish to avoid doing so, to escape

her and never see her again. Yet, he hesitated, and then felt that a definite refusal, after such hesitation, would have been rude. The next moment, he had accompanied her in and was being borne upward in the elevator, still wondering at his own indecision. He hardly heard, or else he misinterpreted, her babbling delight in his presence, the frank admiration of her childlike gaze up at his tall, straight figure, his broad chest, the clear, healthy color of his sober, intelligent face. There was no guile in her glance, but a simplicity far more powerful and significant.

CHAPTER II.

She rang the bell of her apartment, and a maid in a soft lavender uniform, which harmonized with the dove colors of the walls and hangings, answered the door.

"Pretty, ain't it?" said Mrs. Binney, noting the lift of Hugh's head. "I got an artist to do it. Poor fellow! He needed work, and he thought he'd like to try out on decoration. His idea was to work in shell colors. I like different-colored rooms, so he—what do you call it?—harmonized them for me. The halls are kind of neutral, with a bit of violet that goes well with all the other rooms. See! The parlor's yellow, mixed with it." She pushed aside the portières and walked into the drawing-room, switching on the light as she did so.

On a primrose-colored couch near the window sat and blinked a pretty, downy-cheeked, fair-haired girl, who might have been a younger, more delicately organized sister of the Lily Gropper of twenty years ago. She was dressed in a girlish smock of dull green, which brought out the extreme fairness of her hair, and her face was flushed and a little pouting. At the window, near her, could be seen the rough, unpressed tweeds of a man of small and slender stature, whose face was turned away.

"Why, Irene! In the dark? Who's your company?"

"It's I, Mrs. Binney." The man turned toward her, and, with a glance at Hugh, added defiantly, "we were watching the light effects in the Square, the reflections in the rain."

Hugh was aware of a weakness in the man's face which aroused distrust in him. It was a face sensitive and fine in its lines, but too young for its texture. It bespoke an immaturity in its owner out of keeping with the evidence his forehead, temples, and neck gave of his being no longer young enough to match it. It was like a badly told or exaggerated lie. Nor was he improved in appearance by showing that he resented Hugh's level look.

"Now, isn't this fine? This is Ralph Benchley, Hugh—the artist I told you about, who did these rooms. This is Mr. Morriver, Ralph. Irene, this is Mr. Morriver, that I knew before you were born."

The girl stood and bowed with a charming awkwardness, and the artist nodded.

"My first attempt at interior decorating," said Benchley, and snatched the excuse to occupy his eyes with a glance around the walls and ceiling. "I'm a portrait painter."

"Then you're following Whistler's example," said Hugh, trying to be pleasant.

"Now, that's a real compliment," smiled Mrs. Binney.

"Whistler?" Benchley raised his eyebrows.

"Don't you approve of him?" demanded Hugh ironically.

"Whistler's Mother' is my favorite picture," confided Mrs. Binney.

"It's a good pattern," assented Benchley.

"Pattern?" repeated Hugh, between a frown and a smile.

"Not much on color, is it?" Bench-

ley dismissed it. "He had instinct, but no courage."

"Whistler!"

"You must come with me and see some of Ralph's work," hastily put in Mrs. Binney. "Then you'll know what he means by color. I've learned a lot from him. His pictures are awfully deep. Ralph will be great some day!"

Some impulse caused Hugh to look at Irene at the moment, and he saw her beam with her belief and pride. Again he was aware of an uneasiness. Was Lily blind?

"Look!" she was saying. "The dining room's green, a sort of turquoise, and there are the violets and grays again. My room's pink, and Irene's is blue—let me show you!"

"But I haven't time to-night," replied Hugh. "I didn't really expect to stop in here at all. I shall be late for dinner, and my fiancée and her father are coming."

"That's so, you told me you were engaged," nodded Mrs. Binney. "I ought to be jealous!" She laughed, with another glance at him, which embarrassed and annoyed him.

He thought to himself, "Was she always so coarse and crude?" And he looked again at Irene. "No, she never was shy—unexhilarating—like that young thing!"

"Don't blush, Hugh," begged Lily.

His embarrassment melted in disgust. He did not flush; he merely wondered what had led him to come up here to see her. He searched her face for the answer—that round, flaccid, too-pink face, with its mobile mouth and the enthusiastic sparkle of the hazel eyes. It was a kindly face.

"I'm glad to have met you," he lied against his will, in a hypnotized fashion.

"Before you go, tell me first what is she like—your sweetheart? Is she young?"

"Yes."

"Ah—Hugh—youth has its lure! No, no, forgive me! What is her name?"

He didn't want to tell her, but he dreaded the thought of her face and manner if he should attempt not to.

"Madeline——" and with an effort. "Madeline Bonser."

"Your mother approves?"

"My mother is dead," he answered hardly. This bold reference to what had been of the necessary-to-be-buried past, the most sacred, secret, and foolish bit, was close to indecent. Yet she seemed unaware that it bore any connotation more shameful than proper grief. Her eyes brimmed a frank and friendly sympathy.

"I'm so sorry, Hughie. Do you live alone, then?"

"My father is living."

"And you had a brother, too, didn't you? A little boy?"

"He's out West—an engineer."

"Your father wanted you to be a lawyer, and you wanted to write. You see how I remember. Which did you do?"

"I found my father had sense, and I lacked talent."

"Don't you mean persistence?" She sighed, then, taking his elbows in her hands, she gazed at him closely with narrowed eyes. "Is it easier or harder—just being obedient?"

No, she was not too young to be taken for Irene's mother, and the rouge on her face was as frankly paint as when it lay in its scented box with the label on it. Yet the oversoft line of her cheek, the stiff, upward sweep of her blackened lashes, held his attention mentally clamped. He wished she would let go of his elbows. He was seeing, in a protesting gaze, Lily Grop- per as she had been.

"You think," he said slowly and deliberately, "that it has been easier."

"But if you haven't got *that* out of it, what have you?" And she gave his elbows a peevish jerk.

"Madeline," he answered very quietly,

because he knew the name had a power over him as well as over her.

She dropped his arms.

"True," she said with a cheerful conviction which was disconcertingly winning. "It's worth saving up for a big happiness, if it comes. I'd like to meet Madeline some time. May I?"

"Surely," he answered blankly, suppressing all emotions, lest the wrong one escape. He had managed to edge to the door. Now he held out his hand.

"I shall hold you to that. Good-by," said she.

CHAPTER III.

"It is worth saving up for a big happiness—if it comes," she had said.

Hugh Morriver recalled her words and the wistfulness behind them, as he started across the park into the wet easterly wind, cold, yet redolent of early spring. She seemed to have finished life, while he was just about to begin it—because he had had the strength to wait.

Twenty years! That summer, instead of coming home, he had joined a college friend in camp for the months of July and August. Lily Gropper was the daughter of the farmer from whom they procured their provisions and mail. She had been a well-grown, vivacious, merry girl, with something in her manner and her fine hazel eyes that had the power to destroy the peace of mind of any boy she saw fit to grow fond of. She picked out Hugh Morriver, the tall, grave, reserved youth, because her instinct told her he would be the hardest of his group to win.

He met her advances at first with chilling brotherliness which soon ripened into friendly confidentiality. He told her of his ideals, based on his mother's careful training. His mother, whom he worshiped, had suffered deeply through the intemperance and licentiousness of her father and brothers. Lily had sympathized. She had, in truth, fallen in love with his purity, and then, with

human perversity, set about to wreck what she adored. He blamed himself for what followed, being too self-centered to recognize her share in the affair. He recalled the mad, constant dream of her, the feverish hunger for her presence, and, finally, that first kiss which inflamed both and led to the night trysts by the lake.

Then, one day, word came of his mother's sudden illness. He hurried home, only to have his mother die in his arms before he could confess and obtain her pardon for what he considered his great sin. In remorse, on the train, he had made up his mind to right the wrong by marrying the farmer's daughter, but the impossibility of this overwhelmed him when he faced his father's stricken face and realized he would be only adding unspeakable disappointment to anguish by such a course. Besides, in his own environment, touched on all sides by mementos of his mother's superrefinement, the thought of Lily became repulsive to him.

Torn by grief and regret, the boy had registered a vow, before the coffin of his mother, a vow that had the power somewhat to heal his sorrow at the time. It had been hard to hold to that vow, to pay, year by year, for those hours of peace. But Madeline, perhaps, was the reward, and the knowledge of his ability to come to her, strengthened by his struggle, calmed and purged by time.

As he mounted the stoop of his own home, he raised his face to the gold glare of light in the mist above the trees.

"It was worth saving up for," he thought.

The elderly butler who opened the door to him had news that would not keep.

"Mr. Paul is here, sir."

"Paul? When?"

"About an hour ago, sir. He's up in his own room, and I think as how he's

borrowing some of your things to dress for dinner, sir."

"Does father know?"

"He's not home yet, but I believe Mr. Paul phoned to his office. It's business brings him, sir," so he says. He looks fine," he added, in a burst of reminiscent admiration.

"I'll go up and have a look at him. His own room, you say?"

"Yes, sir."

Hugh went up the stairs with genuine pleasure. It was considerate of Paul to come to-night to wipe out the vivid effects of that other encounter.

He found his brother tying his white dress tie before the mirror, while he talked banteringly with Nancy, who had once been Hugh's nurse, then his brother's, and was now the petted housekeeper and queen of the Morriver ménage.

Paul was built like Hugh, tall, broad of shoulder, and neat of hip, a figure now enhanced by the whiteness of his shirt and the snug blackness of his trousers. His head, too, was the same shape, large, with a high forehead, deep-set eyes, and square jaw. But, just as there was a ruddier glow to his skin, so there was a youthful mobility to his mouth, a quick glow to his eyes, and a general liveliness, which Hugh's almost apathetically reserved expression lacked utterly. It could not be entirely accounted for in the eleven years' difference in their ages; it had to do with something more vital and fundamental. Nancy, rendered analytical by her love for them both, nodded her old head, as their greeting confirmed what their presence together always led her to remark.

"Paul!" said Hugh, his slow, restrained smile accenting the quiet delight in his eyes.

"Hugh, old sock! Well, well, well! How did you do it? I came on to find out!" Paul rushed forward and grasped his brother by both hands.

"Say, she must be a curio collector to take you!"

"You're the image of each other, then," put in Nancy defensively.

"Me look like that? Lord forbid! Nancy, you ought to see the letters he wrote me about her. Oh, I say!"

"It ain't decent or proper to tease a man in love. You'll be writing letters like that yourself some day," protested Nancy.

"I have, hundreds of them. One in exactly the same vein was about a Mc-Neal winch that worked out swell on a hard job. One was about a riveter I had down at Padden Hole, a human one. And I think one vacation I wrote like that about a coon who baited fishhooks for me unmatchably."

"He thinks I'm a cool lover, Nancy," interpolated Hugh.

"Oh, him! I suppose he'd carry on awful!"

"Well, I'd tell my only brother something about the lady's appearance and less about her art. Gee, Hugh, I read through that letter carelessly the first time, and when I got through, I said to myself: 'Why does Hugh think I'd be interested in his visit to the Metropolitan Museum?' Nancy, old girl, I don't believe he mentioned till the postscript that the sculptor was a sculptress and that he was engaged to her."

"And I once had a notion that engineering made for accuracy!" exclaimed Hugh.

"Oh, sure, I don't believe you," said Nancy seriously.

"Well, tell me, Nancy, what is she like?"

"Miss Madeline? Oh, she's awful sweet!"

Paul groaned.

"I expected that. And ladylike, of course."

"Why, Mr. Paul!" gasped Nancy.

Hugh flushed unexpectedly. His mind had taken a wild leap across Washington Square to one he believed he had

forgotten all about by now. Beastly word—"ladylike."

"If Hugh would run off with a chorus girl, it would increase my brotherly affection," said Paul, as Nancy rose to leave them. "It's because he always does the expected that we find him so flat. Admit I'm more interesting!" He bent over and took her in his arms and kissed her soundly. "How's that?"

"Mr. Paul!" she gasped, as flustered as a girl. Then she laughed a sharp, though faded, giggle and went from the room distractedly trying to smooth her hair.

"I'm late," said Hugh. "If I don't hurry, she'll be here before I'm dressed."

"Father isn't home yet." Even Paul didn't call him dad.

"Madeline comes early. She lives out of town, and the car drops her here on the way down to call for her father. In that way, we manage to have a longer and more private visit. Are you ready?"

"Yep. Gee, this is tight in the shoulders! I've put on weight."

"I noticed it. You look well. Come on in with me, while I dress."

"Sure! What time does the lady come?"

"Madeline? About six-thirty."

"It's that now. Don't you know lovers are supposed to run before the clock? You're hopeless, Hugh. Business before sweethearts, while you're engaged!"

"It wasn't business," answered Hugh, and was sorry immediately.

"Well, it wasn't romance!" taunted Paul.

But Hugh had regained mastery over his temper and did not answer this, turning it off with a question of his own.

"Andrew said you were here on business. What sort?"

"The Cramptons want to send some one to Mexico to take charge of the

Veritas mine affairs. I'd like to be 'it.'"

"Mexico—now? When it's so unsettled?" Hugh frowned. "Why must they send any one there now?"

Paul regarded his brother steadily.

"We're pretty different, after all," he said at last, with a quick, dry laugh. "Would the danger keep you away? Or are you just worrying for your baby brother's sake?"

"You must consider father. He's aged in these three years you've been away," replied Hugh evasively.

"I'd be safe enough. I have nice manners, an easy-going temper, and a pretty good knowledge of Spanish. Beadleson, when he put it up to me, expressed it by saying I was a good mixer. And I'm crazy to go somewhere on this effete globe where a fellow can wear a six-shooter without arousing the interest of the police department. Ever want to take a crack at a man, Hugh?" Paul said it mockingly, and, although he knew Hugh would not betray any amazement or horror, he enjoyed the sense of shocking him.

"Never," answered Hugh.

"Nor a beast, either?"

"You know I'm no hunter."

"True, true!" deplored Paul. "Oh, Hugh," he burst out suddenly, "why, in God's name, don't you do something anomalous? You're more like the portrait of an ancestor than a human brother."

"Anomalous?" smiled Hugh through the shaving lather.

"Of course you're engaged," went on Paul reflectively.

"Credit me with one surprising feat, then."

"No, it isn't surprising, now I come to think of it. It's inevitable. You're nearly forty, and some one's got to carry on the Morriver tradition. As for her being an artist, why, all society women daub or make mud pies these days. It's the fashion. Even out West we

hear about self-expression. It's the modern form of embroidery."

Hugh motioned with his razor to a bronze group.

"Pretty bit of embroidery, that," he suggested.

It represented two tired horses and a tired laborer, plodding along a heavy road. It was handled in a lumpish, crude, broad manner, poignantly indicative of the bitter heaviness of fatigue. The man and the horses shared the same strong, blunted, inelegant lines which somehow gave the effect of emphasizing their common brutish slavery.

"She didn't do this?" asked Paul incredulously.

Hugh nodded.

"Good heavens!" laughed Paul. "This is one on you! Why, that's socialist propaganda!"

A knock on the door interrupted them. It was Andrew.

"Miss Bonser is here, sir," he announced. "In the library."

"I'll go down," said Paul with alacrity. "Gee, Hugh, this is the best yet. Don't hurry! I'll tell her you're taking a bath."

CHAPTER IV.

The library was a high room, filled with dark and dignified perpendiculars, which were accented by the fact that the sole source of light there at present was a low-shaded lamp on the central table. Paul, conjuring up vivid and definite pictures of his brother's affianced, stepped into the room, expecting, at a glance, to corroborate his impression of a tall, deep-voiced, broad-browed, handsome, but artistically dowdy, woman with serious eyes. Instead he found—nothing.

He drew up in surprise, peering among the shadows, then stepped forward, nearer the lamp. A childish chuckle caused him to turn quickly, his back to the light, and the next instant, a small, lithe figure in a soft, pale dress

rose, like a misty nymph, from behind one of the upholstered chairs, and projected itself upon his breast.

He held her circumspectly for a moment, but the eager pressure of her arms and the expectant, upward thrust of her dimly seen little face swept him into recklessness. "I'm her brother," he thought swiftly and amusedly, as he bent to kiss her, and then promptly forgot that fact.

"Hugh," she whispered happily, her body lax in his embrace. "You do love me!"

Her face yearned toward him again, but the thought of her impending confusion cooled him and kept him sane. Still holding her, he swung around so that the lamplight could tell her of her mistake.

"It's Paul, not Hugh," he explained gently, watching with wonder the slow dawn of comprehension in her eyes.

She drew back and he instantly released her. Then she stood staring at him, her hands clenched at her bosom, her expression strikingly more tragic and dazed than abashed. She appeared like one hearing news of a sudden death.

"It was not Hugh," she said dully.

"I'm Paul," repeated Paul, trying to speak lightly. "In a way, you're my sister, so—so it's quite all right."

She seemed to pull herself together, and smiled a faint smile, which added no mirth to her pallid face.

"Paul," she said. "Yes—Paul—who was out West."

He occupied himself and averted his glance by pushing up a chair for her and arranging a hassock.

"Yes, I dropped in unexpectedly on my family to-day. Please sit down. See how comfortable this looks." He motioned to the chair, still not looking at her. She hesitated a moment and then did as he bade her, and, as he moved to the other side of the room, he treated himself to a good, sweeping view of her, as she sat there in the full

light. Her face was still pale, although no longer startled; her eyes were large, fathomlessly dark, and brilliant. Her dark hair was curly and framed her forehead softly. Her features were small and her lips red. Knowing her to be an artist, it was not odd that she should suggest to him pictures he had seen of Vigée le Brun.

"And are you going back soon?" she asked in the tone of one who is fencing with inadequate dialogue against distressing silence.

"To Mexico, if I'm lucky."

"You like Mexico?"

"It would be an interesting job in a new field." He seated himself in the other chair, within reach of the lamp's rays, and saw her quick, curious scrutiny. "You see, I like adventures."

"Yes," she breathed. Then, as if against her will, "You look very like Hugh."

"But we are very different."

"Yes," she said again, and blushed vividly. "How should I know?"

"I have just told you I like adventures," he smiled.

"Did he never like them?" she asked almost anxiously.

"No, not that I remember." Paul warmed to her confidential tone.

"He is right." She looked down primly at her hands. Then, suddenly, she leaned forward. "I do not usually leap at him from ambush—behind chairs."

"I shall tell no tales," he reassured her, and a glint of humor in her grateful, somber eyes rewarded him.

"You see, he is right," she repeated, solemnly looking away from him.

"You cannot expect me to feel so," he responded, and regretted it, for her delicate face and neck flamed again, and her hands moved convulsively.

"May I compliment you on some work of yours I have seen?" he asked, to change the subject. "It amazes me to think you did it."

"Did what?" All her self-consciousness vanished. "What did you see?"

"The group in Hugh's room. Two weary horses and a man."

"That is called 'Nightfall.' I gave it to Hugh because I think it is the best thing I ever did. Don't judge me by it."

"Aren't we all only to be judged by our best work?"

"But how conceited we'd get!"

"Self-confident—and it would do us good." He saw the quizzical lift to her eyebrow and answered it. "Yes, as different as that," he said.

"Who—what——" She flushed deeply.

"I know Hugh's way of excoriating pride. It's not his fault; it's an inheritance. If it were sincere self-depreciation, and did not conceal a vaster pride, our family would by now be either extinct or begged. I am humbler than he is. I dwell on my best, because I know I cannot trust the depths of my worst."

She listened, musing, without answering.

"We are the best in us," he went on, after a pause. "You are a great artist."

"Oh, Mr.—Mr. Morriver!" she protested swiftly.

"I'm your brother Paul," he corrected.

"Yes, of course. Pardon me—Paul," she faltered.

"I am not an art critic. Perhaps I overestimate that special group, but I do know it expresses harmoniously and powerfully something real—something I should have thought beyond your understanding. Tell me, have you really been tired like that? How could you be?"

"Clay is heavy to work with, and I am not terribly—muscular."

"It isn't that kind of tiredness." He shook his head. "It's the kind I didn't think artists got." She remained silent

again. "What are you smiling at?" he asked.

"How do you know all this?" she inquired with an impetuous, upward thrust of her delicate head. Her dark eyes glittered. It was his turn to ask, "What?"

"The kinds of tiredness. Yes, it was discouragement, the slavery of us all to time, to weakness, to unalterable circumstance. Submission."

"Why were you so discouraged?" he inquired gently.

She raised her arms slightly.

"I want——" she began, then dropped her arms, keeping her head turned away."

"You want," he repeated in her voice, "joy."

She bowed her head, smiling. The light fell prettily on her hair.

"You might have said fame," she said.

"And gone amiss. Women who want fame above everything else don't go and get engaged before they have had it, and found it a bit empty."

"What if they fall in love?"

"That's only a species of joy hunting."

"Then I have found mine."

"Does that follow?" He saw her bite her lower lip distressfully. "No, I'm not cynical," he went on quickly, and generalized to save her. "Artists are different from ordinary people. Love cannot satisfy, but only inspire them. Isn't that true?"

"It sounds comforting," she said archly. "You are very wise."

"I suppose you mean presumptuous. You are thinking: 'This big dub—only you'd say 'brute'—is telling an artist how she feels, when he's no more an artist himself than he's a woman!'"

She nodded.

"Something like that," she admitted.

"You *do* think I'm presumptuous," he said, taken aback.

She suddenly turned her full face to-

ward him, and stared at him steadily. He was astonished by a sort of inward glow, which appeared to render her paler luminous and curiously happy.

"Very presumptuous," she said clearly, but her expression robbed the words of all offense.

"Still, you like your brother?"

He thrust his hand, palm upward, across the table, to seal the truce. She glanced at it under her lashes, but made no attempt to clasp it.

"What, have you been fighting already?" cried Hugh's voice in the doorway.

They rose simultaneously and she went swiftly to her betrothed.

"No, no!" she laughed. "He's very nice—brother—Paul!"

Paul saw Hugh stoop to kiss her, and her quick manner of seeming to shelter in his arms. Hugh's kiss fell on her head.

CHAPTER V.

Paul was the center of interest that evening, and frankly basked in the fact. Hugh, withdrawn a little from the family group after dinner, watched him across the room, wondering why Paul's evident enjoyment of his prominence and adulation irritated him. In Hugh's eyes, Paul's audience were not worth captivating. Being of the family, they were too easily won over. Nor were any of them intellectually discriminating. Beyond everything else, they were well-bred and attentive.

He glanced first at his father, a tall, dignified, white-haired replica of his two handsome sons. Faultlessly attired in well-fitting evening clothes, his head held erect, a smile on his firm lips, he was pleasant enough to look at, but the eye fixed on his younger son was sufficiently indulgent to have found laudable his stupidest remark or most awkward behavior.

Miss Mary Bonser was knitting—or was it crocheting? Hugh had never

been able to distinguish one from the other. Her hands were transparent and slender, and her movements dainty. She and Miss Bonser, considerably older than their brother, Madeline's father, were of a type so delicately lady-like, so full of a faint, frail charm to Hugh, that he often regretted that their kind was growing rarer, and in a generation or two must pass.

Yet, to-night, he saw them clearly for what they were, futile elderly women, easily amused because of the emptiness of their lives and the poverty of their diversitements. They lived in New York City, but were victims of a habit of bashful seclusion that grew upon them with age. Madeline often stayed overnight with them, when the opera, a long concert, play, or a party made the return to her own home in Yonkers inconvenient or fatiguing. Mr. Bonser, too, often made use of their home, as he had done this evening.

Mr. Bonser was dark and slim and fragile, like his daughter. He had all the attributes of an artist except talent. He might have been a foreign relative of his colorless sisters. He was easily kindled to enthusiasm and easily depressed. He was watching Paul now with a delight that showed he was living with him not only the adventures Paul was recounting, but the young man's present joy and triumph in the narrative. And, on Madeline's face, was the same look. In the woman, it was the look of Desdemona experiencing Othello's perils.

Hugh brought himself up with a start. Was this jealousy? He dismissed the thought with an inward laugh, yet he was unaccountably annoyed when, in saying good night, Miss Bonser playfully held up her finger to him and shook her head.

"Ah, but you have an attractive brother! Be careful of him! He has set my old heart fluttering, and that requires power!"

"I could only gain by his winning you," smiled Hugh gallantly.

"But you could lose by his winning some one else," she answered.

"I shall see him packed off to Mexico to-morrow."

"The safest place for him. But, oh, the poor señoritas!"

Hardly understanding, and greatly disapproving of himself, Hugh watched sharply, although covertly, when Paul bade Madeline good night. And that chill pride and reserve, which is so infallibly attendant upon jealousy, made an empty ceremony of his parting kiss to Madeline.

It was with some exasperation that he found that Paul intended to follow him to his room.

"I should think," he hinted, "you'd be tired after your trip."

"Rolling along on ninety-pound rails, in a padded car, is my idea of a rest cure," replied Paul good-humoredly.

"So I gather from your tales of adventure to-night."

"Don't you believe them?" asked Paul.

"They were hugely interesting to us all," answered Hugh.

"Hugh, old man!" Paul put his hand on his brother's arm. "I've altered a lot since I've been away, haven't I?"

"Why—I don't think so." Hugh repented his ungraciousness.

"Can't you notice that? Or is it that you obediently close your eyes to it? I'd rather think you were lying," said Paul wistfully.

"What are you getting at, Paul?"

"When I was a kid at school—and later, at college, I used to boast about you to the fellows. I led them to believe what I thought to be true, that we were more than brothers—real friends."

"Aren't we?" asked Hugh, smiling constrainedly.

"No, and I'm not afraid to say it. You see, I have altered."

"You mean you have grown away from—from home influences."

"Yes, just that. And, because of that, I can see that our friendship never really existed."

"I'm sorry, Paul."

"Sorry that I can see the truth? Well, I'm not."

"Is it the truth?"

"Are you blind to it, yourself, Hugh? My adoration of you was foisted upon me by mother. She worshiped you. She told me, time and again, that I must always turn to you for guidance, as you were all she wished me to become. I was only ten when she died, you know, but it left an ineradicable impression upon me."

"It is unfortunate that she did not set you a better model," said Hugh unemotionally.

"Can that, Hugh! I beg pardon, old sock! I've got to try to make you understand. For both our sakes. Don't set up antagonism. You know perfectly well you *did* help me. The example of your—decency—kept me decent. I used to think that what was hard for me was easy for you, and, on that account, I considered you my superior. You never admitted there need be any struggle. But, lately, I've been wondering if that wasn't just part of that cast-iron shell of self-delusion and reserve you've built round you. You must expect to go unrecognized if you persist in a disguise. You *have* been up against it now and again, haven't you, Hugh?"

"Up against what?" asked Hugh calmly.

"The devil—nature—youth—desire! Something that looks fine and right, or terrible and wrong, just because it's so damn strong! Something which is mostly wrong because it uses up your energy which ought to be accomplishing important work. Something mother used to call sin—because it *was*—in her experience of its effects."

"What do you expect me to say?" asked Hugh, after a pause.

The two brothers eyed each other intently. Then Paul frowned desperately, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Nothing," he answered hopelessly. Then, with a renewed eagerness, "Oh, Hugh, can't we make it? We need to be chums right now. More than ever in our lives! And I've always wanted it. Listen! Once, out in camp, after a hard day, I had the chance to spend a harder night, in the name of relaxation. All the other fellows went. I thought I'd hold myself back with the thought of you, and I wrote you a letter. Yes, and I sent you a letter, but it wasn't the same one. When I got half through the first, I got to thinking of your face when you should read it. It was something like what I've been trying to say to you to-night and—gosh! Well, look in the glass, and you'll know why you never got it. I surrender."

There was another silence. Hugh's composure suggested that he was waiting for Paul to come to the point. In his heart, he wondered where it all led to, and he hoped he might be spared finding out if it meant more emotionalism. Paul was altered—disconcertingly so. His chatter was effusive, unrestrained.

"I wish you could come with me to Mexico," said Paul at last. "I wish we could be together in danger or passion or something that tries a man's guts."

"I'm nearly forty years old," hinted Hugh, raising his brows.

"Then you haven't a minute to lose."

"Shall I take Madeline with me to Mexico?"

Paul looked at him swiftly, and then busied himself with a wrought design on a paper cutter he had picked up from the table.

"Are you really in love with Madeline Bonser?" he asked. And then, when Hugh neither moved nor replied, he dropped the knife, and added with boyish contrition, "I'm pretty fresh, I know! But it's because I'm desperately

beating at something that lies between us."

"Perhaps it's eleven years," Hugh suggested imperturbably.

"Do you feel it so insurmountable?" questioned Paul.

Hugh shrugged his shoulders.

"How old is Madeline?" blurted Paul.

"Sixteen years younger than I am," said Hugh tranquilly.

"My God, Hugh! Are you so damned sure of the marriage ceremony? Haven't you really ever suspected that life doesn't run along according to law? That laws are our desperate effort to curb life? Does this mean anything to you?"

"That you are young, Paul."

"So is Madeline! Hugh, you've got to be young to meet her. You've got to be human to give her a square deal. She needs all—all—you are withholding from her. Oh, let yourself love her, Hugh!"

"Don't you mean, rather, let you see evidences of what is a strictly private relationship between her and me?" asked Hugh calmly, but with a slight flush, his only outward sign of irritation.

Paul drew himself up suddenly with a start. He laughed deprecatingly. He had no right to go further. At best, he could only hint at those things which Madeline had made plain to him in her hungry cry: "You do love me, Hugh?"

"In other words," he said hopelessly, "it's none of my business! I suppose not. I'll butt out. Good night, old scout!"

"Good night, Paul."

They clasped hands firmly. Paul seemed to find a spark of hope in the warmth of his brother's grasp.

"Hugh," he said, "I'm going to say my prayers to-night. Do you know what I'm going to ask for?"

"What?"

"The power, the opportunity, and the

whisky to make you drunk just once," returned Paul solemnly.

Hugh smiled placidly at the mild jest.

CHAPTER VI.

The second day following was Sunday, a day Hugh always spent at Yonkers with Madeline. He went up the night before, and usually attended church with them the next morning, and was one at their formal, heavy, mid-day dinner, to which they invited occasional other guests, his father, and the spinster aunts, or old friends in the neighborhood. This Sunday it was to be Paul and Mr. Morrimer. Before they started for church, Madeline suddenly said to Hugh:

"I've something to show you. Come, we have time."

He followed her through the fine, old-fashioned garden, which was awakening to life under the combined efforts of the March sun and a Greek gardener. Through the well-kept shrubbery to the west was the broad glitter of the Hudson and the smoky gray cliffs of the Palisades, hazily reflecting the morning in dulled, irregular, vertical streaks of gold. She led him to a fair-sized square wooden house, not far from the garage. This was her studio. Barrels of clay covered with tarpaulin, close by, proclaimed it. She took the key from under the stone step and opened the door. The early spring outside was warm and gracious in comparison with the damp gray interior, haunted by the gritty smell of mud and stone. Several shrouded groups of statuary met their eye, and it was to one on the central pedestal Madeline proceeded with a swift, determined tread, as if driven by something more than the fear of being late to church.

"Look," she said, unveiling it deftly. "This is very rough. I only began it yesterday. I worked on it all day. I didn't want to show it to you incom-

plete, and yet—it had such a hold on me I had to look at it this morning to see what I had done. Can you understand what this sketch represents?"

Crudely budding from the modeled clay were two figures going in opposite directions, yet with a sweeping, onward motion in which their was something rotary. They seemed to follow each other. This made for graceful, oval silhouette even at this undeveloped stage of the work. The figures were both women, both draped, both walking forward, with their hands clasped to their breasts. But, whereas one proceeded on her way buoyantly, with up-thrust head and a general suggestion of joy which is oblivious to everything, the other seemed to lag with drooping body, and her lowered head turned with what later would become weary and envious contemplation of her happy companion. Scrawled carelessly into the base clay, as if it were so vitally a part of the design as to be necessary even at the birth of the idea, was the title: "Poverty."

Hugh turned from the group to meet Madeline's anxious gaze.

"It looks like a splendid beginning," he said approvingly.

"Do you understand it?" she demanded almost breathlessly.

"I think, considering the title is right there, that it is fairly obvious," he answered. "You've managed a clever combination. The rich girl's train not only characterizes her by her dress, but unifies the figures so that they seem to grow out of a common base. That is subtlety. And skill."

"The rich one is no differently dressed from the poor one," said Madeline.

"Well, perhaps that would be rubbing in the point. It's lovely, Madeline! Queer!" he added, helping her to wrap it up, and a little discomfited by her disinclination to dilate further on the idea. "Queer! Paul, when he first saw

your 'Nightfall' group, warned me that you had socialistic tendencies."

Still she said nothing, and, although he was a little piqued by this, he respected her silence. When they had locked the studio door and were on their way to the house, he broached some other subject, and she answered him in kind. But his feeling that he had failed her grew upon him in the meditative moments in church. He decided then that he would maneuver for another chance to look at the statue, to see what he had missed. He made Paul's presence at dinner the excuse for speaking about her work, and when Paul told them that he was likely, at any moment, to be sent to Mexico, Hugh saw his opening.

"You must let him see your studio to-day, in case he goes," he said. "He admired 'Nightfall' so much, I'm sure he'd be interested to see what else you have done."

"I would, if you wouldn't consider it too nervy of me," chimed in Paul.

Madeline hesitated with a shyness Hugh had never seen in her before.

"There is nothing finished there," she murmured. And then, as if coming to a sudden decision, "Still, I shall be glad to have you come."

After dinner, the three strolled back to the little building, and Madeline unveiled several of the sketches before rather reluctantly removing the wet cloths from the figure she had shown to Hugh that morning. She said nothing in explanation, and, for a while, all three gazed silently at the suggestive lumps of clay.

"I told Madeline," began Hugh, "that you immediately saw her streak of socialism in 'Nightfall.' This bears you out."

"Socialism!" Paul turned to Madeline. "Is the poverty here economic?" She smiled and wrinkled her brow, but made no answer. "I guess I'm a hopeless sentimentalist, then! I took it to be emo-

tional. I was congratulating you mentally on having refrained from calling it 'Sorrow's Crown of Sorrow.' Their hands on their hearts misled me."

"It's very rough," said Madeline, and seemed anxious to put the coverings on again.

"That was all done in one day—yesterday," said Hugh. "I think you have carried it amazingly far, considering. Let me help, dear." She was making blundering gestures, perilous to the soft, impressionable clay.

On their way back to the house, the afternoon sunshine made spring seem far more advanced than it had been that morning.

"I heard a robin this morning," said Madeline, as they stood looking about them.

"What a glorious day for a ride!" exclaimed Paul, breathing deep.

"Did you send back the car?" asked Hugh.

"Yes. Besides, I was thinking of horses, not limousines."

"I have a little tin runabout that would shake you up as nicely as any galloping horse," said Madeline. "But it only holds two."

"You and Paul go," said Hugh heartily. "It will give you a chance to get acquainted."

"Would you care to—Paul?" asked Madeline quite timidly, after an instant's hesitation.

"Nothing would suit me better! Spring and Westchester roads! I'll take a memory with me to Mexico to keep me awake nights with the homesickness!" exclaimed Paul readily.

Hugh caught an odd little look of inquiry in the eyes Madeline turned upon himself, but, before he could fathom what it might mean, she turned her head away.

"The garage is over here," she said, leading the way. "You can start the car if you like, and bring it up to the

house. I'll go in and put on my hat and coat."

She unlocked the door of the garage for them and slipped away, leaving behind her, in Hugh's mind, an impression that, for the second time that day, she had presented him with a riddle which he had disappointed her by being unable to solve.

"Hugh," said Paul, as they stood alone before the little car, "shall I drop a monkey wrench in the engine?"

"What on earth for?"

Paul regarded him steadily and Hugh returned his look with a slight, confident smile. He realized that Paul was hinting at jealousy. It pleased and flattered him to know, without doubt, that he had cleansed his heart utterly of that emotion. Paul, at last, caught the smile himself, but there was a pucker of doubt between his eyebrows as he bent to crank the car.

CHAPTER VII.

Hugh had an engagement to take Madeline to a theater the next Tuesday night. He looked forward to this as an opportunity to see her alone. Sunday had been an unsatisfactory day. He had had very little of her company then, and when she had been with him, an air of mystery and aloofness had hung around her which was foreign to all she had ever been to him before. He longed for a return to that quietly trustful companionship, those merry, intimate confidences of hers. He wanted to hear from her what, in her heart, she thought of his brother. Added to all this, was a desire to quench a vague doubt in himself, a doubt he would not even give form to in his mind, let alone admit it existed. It had to do with Paul's manner in his talk that first night.

He was to dine with Madeline at her aunts' and, intending to meet her there early, was about to leave the office Tuesday night sooner than was customary for

him. He was putting some papers into a brief case for perusal before he went to bed, when the telephone on his desk rang. He heard the operator's voice, as he took down the receiver, saying: "Wait a moment. I'll see if he has gone," and a woman's distressed: "Do!"

"Hello," he broke in, between wonder and irritation. "This is Hugh Morriver."

"Hugh!" gasped a woman's voice—not Madeline's. "I'm so glad I caught you!"

"Who is it?"

"Lily Binney—Lily Gropper. Hugh, please come to see me! I have something—oh, I'm in awful trouble!" The disembodied voice shattered into deafening clicks in his ear.

Hugh, conscious of the listening operator, tingled from head to foot.

"Very well," he said in a businesslike tone. "To-morrow morning."

"No—no! To-night. To-morrow morning will be too late! Right now!" wailed the voice, and, in fear lest her open misery should acquaint the office with the details of her affairs, Hugh, with a hasty "All right," rang off.

He permitted himself to scowl silently at the phone for an instant, damning the system so perilous to privacy. He had not much belief in the importance of her appeal. He saw now that, having accidentally become aware of his existence and, through his own weakness in paying her a visit, assured of his continued interest in her, she would use any means to further a friendship he had managed to bury in the past and wished to blot out by forgetting. And here he was, going into it all even more deeply! Of course, it was his own fault, and perhaps in to-night's interview he might remedy it.

He finished packing his brief case, put on his hat and coat, and left the office. As he passed the girl at the switchboard, he thought she glanced at him curiously.

"Tell my father, when you see him, that I left unusually early, in order to see a client," he explained, and was aware too late that she could easily find out they had no clients named Binney or Gropper.

Lily herself opened the door of the apartment to him. Her face, under a hasty curtain of powder and rouge, was devastated by tears. She spoke in an annoying tremolo, as real as it sounded insincere.

"Oh, Hugh, what'll I do—what'll I do?" she broke out. "I have no man I can trust to look out for me but you!"

"I am a lawyer and at your service," answered Hugh with cool friendliness.

"Yes—yes. I knew you were like that. It's so lucky for me you're a lawyer! That's the way they do things now, I suppose. Shooting days are over. In New York City, anyway. But I know Lem Binney would have shot the dirty skunk in his tracks!"

Her language shocked Hugh out of any sense of its implication.

"I—er—I hope— Er—you mean—just what?"

She had led him into the opalescent yellow drawing-room, and, motioning him to be seated on the couch, sat beside him. As she did so, she suddenly lost all self-control and sobbed rackingly into a thin, highly scented, elaborate lace handkerchief.

"It's—Irene," she choked inarticulately. "My little Irene!"

"Calm yourself, Mrs. Binney," entreated Hugh, distressed, and involuntarily he reached out his hand in the gesture accepted as denoting a desire to comfort. She unexpectedly grasped his fingers and drew them to the back of the couch, where she sought sustenance from them by squeezing them desperately and reposing her wet face against them. He waited for her to recover herself, preserving his sense of

dignity by allowing no vestige of emotion to swell his heart or attack his features.

"Do you remember that rat-faced little shrimp, Ralph Benchley?" she demanded at length, between hoarse gasps, as she mopped her face with the handkerchief that had acquired a rose tint in her service. She still clung to him with the other hand.

"The artist who decorated these rooms?" asked Hugh.

"What a blame fool I was! I paid him a thousand dollars for it—because he looked hungry. I told Irene that. I said to her: 'That poor fellow's starving!' Oh, I'm soft! And I fell for the way he talked about art. He seemed so genuine and kind of full of real feeling! Sure! I could see he was rude and awful moody, but you kind of excused that. I did, I mean. I says, 'That's that temperament we hear so much about.' I won't say I wasn't proud of being so intimate with a real artist. I took him for what he said he was worth, because I don't really know anything about art. And now, likely as not, I'll find out all this is a fraud, too. He's a low, sneaking thief! He's a slimy cur!" Her voice broke again. "He's done the worst thing he could to me to pay me back for all I done for him! He's stole Irene! He's run away with her—that little kid—my baby!" Again she abandoned herself to grief.

Instead of melting with pity, Hugh only stiffened with uneasiness at the sight of her transports. He wished fervently that she would let go of his hand. He knew this was a heartless attitude, and he wondered at himself. He had been troubled when he had seen Benchley and Irene together the other night. What he had vaguely dreaded then had come to pass, and he was not so moved by the fact as he had been by the premonition. He fought back a caddish bewilderment that Lily Gropper should be so exercised over her daughter's conduct

when she—— He had to interrupt his own thoughts.

"How do you expect me to help?" he asked.

"You must find him for me. Let me once get at him and horsewhip him!"

"Do you think that would help your daughter's reputation?"

"Her reputation's gone now! I want revenge!"

"But—but that—that would be so cheap!"

"You mean you think I could shoot him and get away with it?" she demanded eagerly. "You're a lawyer. Tell me honestly! I'm a woman and a mother, and it's the unwritten law! *Have* I a chance?"

"Great Scott, no! And with me accessory before the fact!" cried Hugh, between exasperation and amusement. "Lily, pull yourself together. We must go at this in cool common sense. I can find him and compel him to marry the girl or have him legally punished for abduction. Is he married?"

"No! He don't believe in marriage. Oh, my God! I'd forgot that. He's living with some woman now. If she hears, she may kill Irene!"

"Nonsense! Where did he live? If we could find this woman, we might find out something from her. If he is not married, do you wish him to marry Irene?"

"Oh, he'd make an awful husband, wouldn't he?"

"You know him better than I do," declared Hugh impatiently. "But this much I must tell you: I cannot find him for you just to satisfy your desire for revenge."

"Of course she could divorce him!" mused Lily, sniffing thoughtfully. "Leave him alone, and he'll give her cause enough—and it don't hurt a woman socially nowadays to be a divorcee."

"Then it's settled. Give me his ad-

dress and I'll go around there in the morning." He tried to withdraw his hand and rise.

"In the morning!" she gasped in horror. "In the morning it'll be too late! Suppose he is married already. We don't know! These men who don't believe in marriage usually are. Oh, Hugh, she's only a child—she might be your own daughter! Haven't you any heart? Can't you see what delay will mean? Why, by morning she may feel like killing herself."

"I'm sorry," said Hugh coldly. "If I help you at all—as I shall be glad to—it must be on my own terms. To-night I am not free."

"But can anything be more important than a young girl's honor?"

"It is not in my power to save that."

"Yes, it is. Whatever she has done already, it is. Good God! Don't you owe me something? Do you forget the past entirely? Here's a chance to right a wrong. Honor for honor! What is your engagement? Business?"

"No, it is with my fiancée." He was furious with himself for the effect produced on him by her plea. She had shown a keenly intimate knowledge of him in realizing he would always hold himself guilty toward her. Her appeal had been instinctive. She had not the intelligence to plan this attack in advance.

"Your fiancée," she repeated. "What would she think of you if she knew you had sacrificed a young girl's innocence to her whim? Surely you could give up one night!"

"This is a special engagement, a theater."

"And you could sit through a play knowing— Oh, Hugh!" She broke down again, and Hugh, with a pale face, watched her. He was beaten.

"Where is your phone?" he asked.

She covered his hand with grateful kisses; she threw her scented weight upon his chest, and his arms closed about

her with the involuntary affection of the benefactor.

CHAPTER VIII.

Madeline had never been unreasonable or exacting. She was not one to pout or flirt. He had broken a date or two with her before this, and occasionally he had come late to a meeting, and she had never taken these accidents as personal affronts. He loved her equability and depended on it. To-night, he explained that very urgent business forced him to forgo the theater, and he offered to send her the tickets so she could take one of her aunts. She said they were going to a concert, but if his father or Paul— Of course, Paul, unless he, too, were engaged— And she liked Paul. But he was fairly sure Paul had an engagement.

"I'll call up the house and tell them to send one of the servants for the tickets, and father or Paul will call for you."

And it transpired that Paul was able to break his date, and went with her, for Mr. Morriver had seen the play and never cared to go twice to the same show. So much the better for Madeline. Yes, she liked Paul.

When he left the phone, a new shock awaited Hugh. He found Lily dressed in a long coat and a large, veil-draped hat, evidently intent on going out with him. He accepted the situation without demur. She handed him a card, on which in a dark, thick, decorative hand an address and name had been written. He saw it was the neighborhood west of the Square, but the fact that it had once been a poverty-stricken district was worth nothing in these years of art's invasion.

"That's where he used to live, with a woman who makes jewelry. Awful heavy stuff, too showy to wear, I think! I bought some off her, too, to help along. Irene used to like it, and turned up her

nose at my diamonds. He had a terrible hold on her. I might have seen it if I wasn't blind."

"Do you think this woman knew of his infatuation for Irene?"

"I don't know. You can't say what these radicals will tell about themselves and what they will keep dark. They do what you don't expect, so there's no use expecting. But she might be able to give us a hint as to where he'd be likely to go."

"I suppose we'd better go as disinterested patrons of art. We'll say we want to see him about having a portrait painted."

"Yes, that's good. Even artists hate to lose a customer, and they're always hard up."

He had dreaded to go out with her for fear she might weep in the streets, but now that she was doing something she considered useful, she was composed and greatly interested in the adventure.

"I never saw her—he used to bring us the jewelry. I'm kind of anxious to see what she looks like," she confided to him chattily, when they got to the street.

They had to walk up four flights of a common, not too clean tenement, to get to the Benchleys' apartment. The gas jet in the hall was turned low and flickered low-spiritedly in a mysterious draft. They rang a bell and waited some time before any one came to the door. Inside, there was no light at all, and the murky illumination of the hall showed a dim, untidy figure, with long, straight hair, innocent of hairpins, and a bag dress of some fuzzy brown material, the straight lines of which were accented by several long, heavy strings of beads that clicked and jingled as she moved. She gave the effect she intended to produce, of an Indian woman.

"Is Mr. Benchley at home?" questioned Hugh.

"No," she said inscrutably, and seemed about to shut the door.

"I've come to order a portrait, and I'd like to see some of his work. He does portraits, doesn't he?"

"Yes. Come in. I'll light up. Of course, you realize this sort of light does not do them justice." She led the way inside, and they groped cautiously after her to where the early evening sky made blue rectangles of two windows in the front room. "Wait at the door. You'll trip over something," advised the woman nonchalantly, and presently she struck a match, lighting a gas lamp with an untidy shade, and they saw the full value of her advice, for the floor was littered with almost everything but chairs—a mattress, cushions, tables, an easel, several boxes, a model stand, supporting more chaos, drapery of all colors, books and dilapidated art pamphlets, vases of copper or pottery, and unframed canvases.

The woman stooped and picked up several of these last and placed them one by one upon the easel, while Hugh and Lily watched in silence. There was something odd about her phlegmatic manner. Her face, although a little heavy, because of her long, thick-lidded eyes, was somber and handsome.

"The light is bad," said Hugh at length, feeling he must put an end to this comedy. "Perhaps I had better come in the daytime. I wish to see Mr. Benchley himself, anyway."

"Very well." The woman placed the rest of the pictures on the floor.

"I'll be in to-morrow morning," said Hugh.

"He won't be here to-morrow morning," answered the woman.

Hugh felt Lily make a spasmodic gesture, and he spoke before she could.

"Doesn't he live here?"

"He's away."

"When will he be back?"

The woman shrugged indifferently.

"Back here? Perhaps never."

"But, surely, if this is his home——"
"Can't he change his home?" She spoke as placidly as a real-estate agent.

"You—you are—his wife—arent you?" put in Lily tremulously.

"Me? No. He's not married. I've been living with him, if that's what you mean."

"Ah, I see." Hugh spoke as if the announcement were a natural one. "But you've decided to separate?"

"He did. I was quite satisfied to go on," she said, unmoved. "I think he's foolish, but he doesn't. And as it's his affair, not mine, what I think doesn't particularly matter."

"In a partnership of this sort, I should think you might have some say," suggested Hugh mildly.

"I still love him. Not with that same emotion and curiosity I felt when I first knew him, of course. But he has lost interest in me because he has found some one else."

"Do you know who it is?" Hugh held Lily's arm restrainingly.

The woman's eyes lengthened and her lips curled.

"Whose business is that?" she asked.

"Her mother's," burst out Lily, spurning prudence and self-control.

"If you are her mother," said the woman, after a slight pause in which she stared steadily at the veiled face, "you know more than I do."

"This is better luck than you deserve," said Hugh to Lily sternly.

"Love!" cried Lily hysterically. "What do you know about love? You, that's so calm when the man you say you love goes off with another woman! I love! I love my girl, and it's not nature to be calm, knowing the harm she's come to!"

"Harm?" asked the woman. "If he were swearing a lot of lies to her before a minister or a sort of policeman, you'd be celebrating it for her as the happiest event in her life!"

"We did not come here to discuss

this," said Hugh. "We came to learn from you where your—where Mr. Benchley may have gone to-night."

"I thought you said you came to buy pictures."

"That was our method of getting an interview with you. You have the right to refuse to answer our inquiries," said Hugh with winning courtesy.

"How can I say where he is to-night?" she asked indifferently.

"Out of town, perhaps?"

"He likes early spring in the country. That's not unlikely."

"Would you give us the name of any friend in the country you think he would go to?"

"What right have you to know?"

"The right to rescue a very young girl from her folly, for the sake of her future lasting happiness," answered Hugh in his best oratorical manner, hoping to impress her.

"Lasting happiness," repeated the woman bitterly. "Who can demand that?"

Her tone arrested Hugh's attention. It was her one and only cry of pain.

"For Heaven's sake! Tell us all you know about it!" begged Lily, again losing hold on herself. "Aren't you human? Can't you see that if he loses her, he will return to you?"

The woman's eye flickered. Her teeth gleamed where her lip lifted one-sidedly.

"If he comes back to me for any other reason than because he loves me, he won't find me! Remember, I am not his wife," she said proudly. She moved toward the door, and they followed hopelessly. "You can stop at Finello's and the Yellow Teacup. Sometimes he has supper there," she said composedly. "Or at Sascha's. Some one there may know something about his plans."

Hugh thanked her politically for these vague hints, and took down the addresses of the little eating places, to-

gether with others she thought fit to add to the list. Then they said good night to her, as she leaned carelessly against the door jamb. She did not respond to their leave-taking, but as they were about to descend the stair, she suddenly called after them.

"He had tickets given him for the Russian ballet," she said. "Of course, he may have given them away."

"We'll go, to make sure," answered Hugh. "Thanks for the hint."

She did not answer, and they heard the door close, as she withdrew inside.

"Poor thing!" breathed Lily, between pity and relief, as they went on their way. "She wants him back awful—she don't really care how. But she won't let on, even to herself."

CHAPTER IX.

They went from restaurant to restaurant in vain, and, failing to find a better clew to Benchley's whereabouts than the suggestion about the Russian ballet, they ended at the opera house. It was, at best, a slim chance to take. The crowds were enormous and confusing. Although Hugh was tall and could command a view of many faces, he was handicapped by his uncertain remembrance of the features of either Benchley or Irene. At last, they were the only people left in the big, drafty lobby. Lily had thrown back her veil to see better, and her face under the severe drapery looked pitifully haggard and hard. Her body drooped with hopeless fatigue. Hugh, glancing down at her, for the first time was stirred to a deep and tender pity for her.

"Lily," he said, in his new-found kindness dropping formality, "you had better give up for to-night, and let me take you home. Save some strength for the search to-morrow."

She raised her eyes to him. They were large, brilliant eyes, handsome, in spite of her weariness.

"All right," she said obediently. "You're awful good to me, Hughie."

"Let me call a taxi. Wait here." He left her, to return a moment later and lead her to the waiting cab. When he followed her into it, he noted how she lay limply back against the cushions, silent and exhausted, a phase of her misery that had a far greater power over him than her former unrestraint. He said nothing, and the cab turned east to Fifth Avenue, and then smoothly south.

She remained passive, but once she raised her hand to her face, and, in the sweeping, evanescent light of a street lamp, he perceived the glitter of tears upon her cheek. The sight of them, abundant and quiet, stabbed him.

"Don't take it so hard," he faltered. The words were so cold and futile and the need for the expression of his sympathy so great, that he put out his hand and covered hers with it. The next instant she was bowed low, overcome with heavy sobbing, like a storm-swept tree.

"To go back, without her! - What shall I do? No—no—it ain't only what's happened to her," she recovered herself sufficiently to gasp passionately. "That woman was right! It ain't her—it's me I'm thinking of now—and sorry for! She may be happy, poor child! And I'd shield her reputation with my life and soul! I guess it's knowing that. I guess it's because I see I'm old now—it's all over with me! She don't need me, and I'm alone without her!"

"Lily"—he squeezed her hand convulsively—"you must not talk that way!"

He was aware suddenly of her nearness to him, not merely physically, but spiritually. Irrationally, he felt the years wiped out. For the first time since she had come back into his life, he realized that this was still Lily Groppe, dangerous, virile, alluring, with her magnetic eyes, the irresistible fascination of her supple body, and the tremendous emotional force which seemed

to overflow from her richly sentimental nature, a stream in which he had been once so ecstatically and indefensibly submerged. He released her hand almost fearfully.

"No!" she cried, as if his action had drawn with it a tangled nerve. "Oh, Hugh, forget yourself now! I need your help. Can't you see? Take my hand again or put your arm around me! Are you afraid? Haven't you any heart at all?"

He put his arm about her desperately, and the recklessness he called upon to combat his reserve flooded him like waters rushing with blind eagerness through a bursting dam. He drew her to him fiercely, and, glimpsing her mouth so near his own, kissed her with increasing avidity, again and again.

The swerve of the taxi, as it turned into Washington Square, instantly checked his ardor. Years of self-consciousness keyed him nervously to the dread of the detection of that weakness he had thought to have banished in himself by sheer denial. Once the current of his intoxication had been interfered with; once, as he would have put it, he was himself again, a deadly repulsion took the place of that hot, live desire. He became a creature of futile, lacerating remorse.

He helped her from the taxi with repugnance, and, going up in the elevator to her apartment, stared over her head into vacancy. She gave him the key to her door and, when he had opened it for her, inquired, without any perception of his new mood, whether he was not coming in. He said "No," abruptly, and turned to ring for the already departed elevator.

"But you won't go till you find out if there is some message from Irene, will you? Word may have come while we were out," she said.

"Very well. I'll wait here." He did not move from the doorway.

She studied him for a moment with

wonder, in which there was no rancor, then left him, to light up her rooms and hunt in vain for a note or any record of a message. She shook her head silently as she came to the door to tell him the result of her search. She looked, he thought, like a good dog who has been unable to do his master's bidding.

"Nothing?" he inquired coolly. "Well, then, good night."

"Hugh," she pleaded, her hand out, "mayn't I even thank you?"

"There's nothing to thank me for yet. Wait till we find her," he answered with an attempt at bluff good nature, and escaped.

He made his way across the park to his own home, his jaw set, and his hands clenched in his pockets as if the screwing up of his whole being now could in some way counteract his former nonresistance.

As he was about to mount the stoop, a figure, approaching the house, hailed him blithely.

"I knew your walk clear across the park. You look as if you were dodging devils. Were you?" asked Paul.

"Did you enjoy the play?"

"Quite good, but Madeline wouldn't let me take her to supper," complained Paul.

They had reached the hall by now, disposed of their coats, and started upstairs. It was natural they should proceed without talking. Their father was a light sleeper, and they had acquired in boyhood the habit of moving noiselessly through the halls. But when Hugh reached his room, to which Paul followed, he noticed in the latter a pre-occupation not unlike his own.

"Good night," he said, with no curiosity to fathom his brother's constraint and longing, though dreading to be alone.

"Good night." Paul was about to go, but turned again, just outside his brother's door, impulsively. "Hugh, was it pressing business or something

private that you went in for to-night?" he demanded jerkily.

Hugh's self-control, professional and inherent, served him well, keeping his face calm and inexpressive.

"Business has been known to be both pressing and private," he said.

"Equivocation isn't square for either of us," said Paul, after a short silence. "Here's the open truth: I saw you with her."

Hugh's guilty mind sent a throb like an electric shock through him.

"You saw—what?" he asked with deliberation.

"In the lobby of the opera house. You and she were standing together. I could suspect you of handling a divorce case on your own, only I know you are as opposed to them as father. She's that type."

"Where were you?" Hugh had mastered himself completely.

"Looking for a taxi on Broadway. Madeline didn't see you. I pointed to something across the street so she wouldn't. Would you have cared if she had?"

Hugh lifted his brows indifferently.

"I was aiding that woman in tracing a lost relative," he explained patiently.

"Is it a case they have at the office?" asked Paul, a bit flushed at his own apparent doubt.

"No. The woman is an old acquaintance in distress."

"Hugh—you can swear she is not more than that to you?"

"What are you insinuating, Paul?"

"Insinuating? I am speaking as plainly as I can. You are engaged to Madeline Bonser. Have you been true to that engagement?"

Hugh was too occupied with the turmoil in his own mind to question his brother's right to speak thus or to note the smoldering gleam in Paul's eyes. Where most men would, in all honesty, have replied to that inquiry with a ringing: "Yes," Hugh, still smarting under

self-castigation, found relief in an extremity of truth. He chose to say nothing, but, with lifted head and inscrutable face, he turned away, rudely closing the door in his brother's face.

CHAPTER X.

While Hugh and Paul were at breakfast with their father, all excusably silent over the morning papers, the telephone rang and Hugh was called to speak with Madeline, who was still at her aunts'. Her voice, usually soft, though full, awakened harsh inflections in the receiver as more strident and penetrative voices do naturally. She was evidently breathing oddly, like one greatly excited. Yet her words were not at all alarming.

"I'm going to stay in to-day to do some shopping," she said. "Shan't we have tea together somewhere?"

"I'm sorry," answered Hugh. "Last night's case is still hanging over. I shall be busy with my client all afternoon. I shan't have time for a tea date to-day."

"Oh, Hugh!" The phone grated a moment, then quite smoothly: "All right. But please see me soon. Can you come for dinner to-night?"

"I'll try my best. May I phone you later?"

"Phone to the house at Yonkers and let Mrs. Purcell know. Try to come." And she rang off.

Hugh met four eyes as he entered the dining room, from where the phone conversations were audible. Paul threw him a swiftly averted glance, while his father's stare was ingenuously inquisitive.

"What client was that, Hugh?" he asked with one of those inconvenient bursts of interest to which incurious men are often subject.

"A Mrs. Binney, father, a woman I met several years ago, has applied to me in strict privacy to locate a member

of her family." Hugh spoke steadily, schooling himself not to look at Paul.

His father appeared perplexed and uneasy.

"This—this is not an unpleasant case, I hope?" Mr. Morrimer was of the time and school that referred delicately to all sex complications in these terms.

"Not divorce, no," said Hugh shortly, and got back to his newspaper.

As he left the house, Hugh hesitated on the stoop, looking across the park. Why didn't he have the courage to tell Lily to get a private detective? That was what she really needed. He thought of phoning her to that effect from the office, but he had the imagination to see that in her eyes this would seem not so cold as cowardly. He started down the steps and aimlessly across the park. He would see her and tell her the truth face to face.

The maid showed him into the drawing-room, and a moment later, he heard Lily's footsteps, hurrying down the hall. She had on a pretty morning negligee, rose color, and immensely becoming. She wore a boudoir cap of rich lace and heavy ribbon, which added a charm to her rounded face. She looked neat in it, which is not always the happy effect of boudoir caps. Her blond hair, fair skin, and well-developed form somehow acquired from it a wholesome, virile character to be found in the merry, buxom, red-blooded ladies of the old Dutch masters. Her eyes were shining with optimistic excitement, as she held out a paper.

"See! Some one was kind enough to send me this!" she exclaimed without any preliminary greeting. "It's a real clew at last."

On the paper was written in a firm, fluent hand:

Ralph Benchley was seen with a young girl, buying a ticket for White Plains. Theresa Raccini, a sculptress, has a place up there. She is a friend of his and he often goes to house parties she gives.

"Who wrote this?" asked Hugh.

"I don't know. It was stuck under the door. I looked up Raccini in the phone book, but couldn't find it. Then I called you up, but you'd left. It was awful nice of you to come here. Can you go to White Plains with me? I'll be ready in a minute."

"It is quite impossible," said Hugh decisively. "I have an important case in court this morning."

"Oh, but suppose they don't stay there? How can we delay?" she demanded.

"We? It is quite possible for you to go without me!"

"Haven't you any real interest? She's a young girl, young enough to be your own daughter!" exclaimed Lily sharply. Then she flushed remorsefully, and her large eyes darkened with self-reproach, as she patted his arm. "Forgive me, Hughie. It's my nerves. It's been a fierce strain, honest! Sure, I can go without you. What call have I to drag you round on my business, anyway?"

It is not gratitude we crave, so much as surprise, at our kindnesses. Nothing kills the benefactor's zeal so thoroughly as anticipation on the part of the benefited. Lily's natural and sunny sense of fair play won Hugh completely.

"If you have any trouble at all, phone my office and I'll come up as soon as I'm free," said he, actually ashamed at offering so little, he who had come to inform her that he was about to wash his hands of her case.

"I don't know what I'd done without you, Hugh!" said Lily tremulously. "I wish there was something I could do—anything—to show you how I appreciate you!"

A stone saint could not have been heartless enough to inform her at that moment that there *was* something she could do; and that it was to go away and leave him in peace.

CHAPTER XI.

Of course, Lily called him up from White Plains. He got the message when he returned to his office from court. He was no less vexed because he realized that it was inevitable. Now that he was away from her, he saw that he had been a fool to place himself so freely at her beck and call. But he had to make good his promise. He did not hurry himself, however, and it was nearly five when he alighted at the White Plains station and found Lily waiting for him in deep affliction.

"I was so sure I was going to find her!" she exclaimed. "I thought you'd never come. You don't know how awful it is just to wait and do nothing! I'm almost crazy!"

"I'm sorry," he muttered contritely. Being again in her presence, he felt the full force of her distress and was mortified by his own insensibility. "Tell me all about it."

It seemed that when she had reached Raccini's, she had been met by a bland, polite woman who had never heard of Irene and only slightly knew Ralph Benchley.

"I told her they said he often came up to her house parties, and she smiled and said: 'I dare say. The name is familiar, but I can't remember the face that goes with it.' She was so agreeable and frank, I believed every word she said. I ended up by telling her the whole story—who I was and all—but I couldn't get anything more out of her. Then, after I left her, it struck me she might have been lying. I kind of felt Irene was in that house. I saw a neighbor come out on her porch, and I went up to her and said: 'Which is Miss Raccini's house?' She pointed it out. 'She's an artist, ain't she?' I asked. 'Yes,' says she, 'a sculptress.' 'It's a regular artist I want,' I said, remembering last night. 'She expected one up here. Did she have any visitors yesterday?' Right

away she said, 'Yes, indeed; I was on the porch when they came up in the evening. Was it a lady or gentleman artist you wanted?' 'A lady,' I answered. 'A lady came up,' says she, 'with a man. But he looked more like an artist than her.'

"Of course, it was Irene and him. I went right back to Raccini's and told her all about it. She lied again, smiling like before, except that she showed plain that she didn't care whether I believed her or not. I begged her to let me go through the house. Then I lost my temper, and she put me out. Then I went and phoned you and walked around near the street till three o'clock, when I saw her come out alone and lock the door. That looked like the house was empty, so I came here to wait for you. They might have left while I was phoning. I guess I balled it up. I shouldn't have told her who I was, and I know I shouldn't have lost my temper."

"That was unfortunate, but natural. You are greatly overwrought," said Hugh soothingly. "Have you had any lunch?"

"I couldn't eat any." Her eyes filled with tears.

"You must try before we do anything else. Eating will rest and strengthen you."

He made her go with him to a near-by restaurant, where he ordered a substantial tea for her, and she ate obediently, though obviously without appetite. He encouraged her to talk, and, although at first she could speak of nothing but the nefarious treachery of Ralph Benchley, she gradually wandered from that subject into reminiscences of Irene's girlhood, of Mr. Binney's kindness, of an affair she nearly had in the eighth year of her married life, with Galloway, the inventor, whose genius made her husband rich. She made ingenuous implications of the depths of her feelings for the man, and took shockingly elaborate care to convince Hugh that

she had remained faithful to her husband. He was amazed to find himself listening to her with interest that was akin to sympathy.

It was nearly dark when they set out for Miss Raccini's. They found the little house still unlighted and having the appearance of being deserted.

"She can't be long, though, if she's coming back," pleaded Lily, when he advised her to give up the hope of an interview.

"I have a date for dinner in Yonkers," he reminded her.

"It won't take long to ride over from here. Let's wait on the porch. There's a sort of bench there, and it isn't really cold," she argued.

They dismissed their taxi then, and proceeded up to the porch, which later in the spring would be a vined-in bower, but at present was a sort of trellised cage. They were silent some time after they had seated themselves.

"Is your date with your sweetheart?" she asked at last, naively.

"Madeline—Miss Bonser? Yes," he answered reticently.

"You've never told me anything about her, Hugh, and I've told you everything in my heart," said Lily musingly, but without reproach. "I suppose because your romance is alive and mine are all dead. Hughie, I could fall in love with you all over again, but what would be the use? It would make trouble for both of us—that's about all. After we find Irene, I guess I'll go away somewhere with her. When you're our age, anyway, you get a certain amount of sense. Though I nearly lost it last night when you kissed me!" She placed her hand over his affectionately. Her words had brought an unpleasant tingling to his scalp, her gesture somehow robbed them of that power to shame. He felt a glow of warmth, distinct from passion; he saw her candor less as boldness than honesty. It seemed to steady him like the full view of the danger he must

fight, and she herself had suggested that she would go away.

They remained talking for some time more. At least she did. She had stories of Irene, of her neighbors, of herself, all flavorful, all frank, with a profound and wondering respect in them for the importance of sex.

Night had settled with the chill, early, six-o'clock darkness of March, when suddenly, a long, sweeping glare of light proclaimed the slowing-down approach of a motor car. It stopped before an old-fashioned wooden gate which led to the walk up to the steps of the house. Hugh and Lily hushed their own conversation on hearing voices.

"Not now," said a woman in tones that were familiar, yet not instantly recognized. "It is getting late. We really have to hurry."

"Just for a moment," pleaded the other woman's voice, and Hugh was unable to distinguish what else she said, for Lily had laid her hand on his, whispering incoherently:

"What shall we do? Shall I rush up and pull her out of the car? Are they getting out? Oh, Hugh, I'm nervous!"

The automobile party had alighted, and were now coming up the walk, indistinctly silhouetted against the subdued glow of the headlights of the car, two women and a man.

"It's not Ralph!" exclaimed Lily in a low, frightened voice. "It's too tall!"

Hugh hardly heard her. The voices and figures of two of the party had become unmistakable, and, drawing Lily back into a deeper shadow of the porch, he whispered to her to be quiet.

Miss Raccini came first, chattering about plaster casts. She opened the door and switched on the hall lights, which lit up the faces of her two guests, who followed her into the house. In that moment, it seemed to Hugh that he was hearing a thunderous voice shout mercilessly into his ear something he had tried not to hear for the past week,

something which, hearing now, he tried his best not to understand.

"Come," said Hugh, when the door had closed behind them.

"But now is our chance! You can go in and question her. You could get a lot more out of her than I did," protested Lily.

"No," answered Hugh quickly. "Some other time. Let us go before they come out again." He took her arm and tried to lead her away.

"But—after we've waited all this time, here in the cold!"

"No matter," said Hugh impatiently. "We can do nothing now, and I don't want to meet these people who have gone in."

"Why not?" demanded Lily, stubborn and indignant. "We have done no harm!"

"Quite true. But I know them. One—one is my brother."

"Well—are you ashamed to introduce me to him?"

"The other is my fiancée." He felt her scrutinize him curiously in the dark. "Come," he repeated, irritated by her unspoken amazement and the pity it implied. She said no more, but went with him with an understanding meekness which annoyed him even more.

They had to walk the length of the block to the car line. When they had gone a short distance, the searching fingers of a headlight stretched out to them, but before it clutched them they drew into the shadow of some hedges near the walk. The car went on cautiously on the uneven road, and Hugh saw Madeline's profile turned earnestly to Paul. It was as delicate as an ebony cameo against the haze of street lights.

CHAPTER XII.

After leaving Lily at the station, Hugh took a taxi to White Plains. As he was driven jerkily over those very roads crossed earlier in the evening by

his brother and Madeline, his thoughts naturally were all of them, and, at first, he was filled with turbulent resentment, not unmixed with fear.

In the short period Paul had known Madeline, had something more than friendship sprung up between them? Was there a reason for that jealousy he had so promptly choked within himself as being both ignoble and unfounded? In this case, his indifference and trust might be accounted ridiculous. Did they feel it to be so, while taking advantage of it? He could not conceive of such disloyalty in either of them. He was ashamed of his suspicions. As usual, he thought of conduct as reprehensible or commendable—as if all action were consciously motivated and voluntary.

He soon had an explanation for their presence together which was satisfactory to him, although it left a good deal to chance. He knew Paul had been offered the use of a friend's car and had intended to avail himself of it today. It was possible that he had accidentally met Madeline and had proposed, because of the mild, clear weather, to drive her home. As for their stopping at Miss Raccini's, he remembered now Madeline had once mentioned a girl with a foreign name, a former fellow student at art school, who had a studio somewhere in this neighborhood. Madeline often visited her to talk shop with her. Paul's interest in sculpture probably suggested to her to introduce him to her sister artist.

Hugh's uneasiness was completely lulled by the time he reached his destination. He found Madeline looking as serene as ever, dressed in one of her simple, pale-silk frocks, festive, but in nowise formal. She was very sweet to look at, and to-night Hugh found in her an added charm, a suggestion of mystery. It was something that caused him to wait for her to speak of her visit to Raccini's. But she did not mention it

all through dinner, and, in answer to his circumspect questioning as to whether she had finished her shopping satisfactorily, she gave ready affirmatives with a bright assurance which neither evaded the subject nor pursued it.

When, as to-night, Hugh was the only guest for dinner, Mr. Bonser was in the habit of treating himself to their company all evening, so it did not seem likely that they would have a chance to speak privately to one another. As time wore on, Hugh began to be rather glad of this. There was an aloofness about Madeline which made her increasingly strange to-night. He got an odd impression that this was his own fault, that he had been subtly altered, coarsened, by having seen too much of Lily. Perhaps Madeline was aware of a deterioration in him and was withdrawing herself unconsciously from this newly awakened brutishness—for so jealousy appeared in her presence; ugly and common, an uncurbed passion belonging to Lily's world.

But, suddenly, Madeline turned from the window near which she had been standing, looking across the dark to where the river sparkled in the moonlight.

"Hugh, let's go to the studio!" she exclaimed. "I want you to see what I've done to that group I showed you Sunday."

"Will you come, sir?" Hugh addressed her father courteously.

"No—I'll take this chance to look at the papers," smiled Mr. Bonser. "Madeline, don't you go down to the studio without a wrap," he added a little disapprovingly, for she had interrupted an interesting political discussion between himself and Hugh.

"I have a sweater in the hall cupboard," answered Madeline promptly. "Come on, Hugh. You may need your overcoat, too."

He helped her on with her sweater. It was thick and too large for her and

emphasized her slim fragility, making her the more endearing. But she did not permit him to take advantage of his office. The garment went on with ease and dispatch, and she moved away from him to adjust the collar herself. He was highly sensitive to this, and when their hands accidentally touched, in opening the door, out of respect for her mood, he drew back instantly and caught a strange gleam from her dark eyes in reply.

"Aren't the stars gorgeous, and doesn't it smell like spring!" she exclaimed, as they descended the veranda steps. "Feel! Already there is a sort of warmth to the earth—a live breathing coming up as the cool of the night comes down. What an emotional time it is! Do you understand me, Hugh?"

"It sounds very simple, dear. But we are walking in the wrong direction. The studio is over there." He paused and pointed, and she drifted on, away from him.

"We're not going there, Hugh," she said gently, over her shoulder. "Didn't you guess that that was just an excuse to get you away from dad?"

It was a very small, a pardonable deception. She had been guilty of the like before, but never in quite this way. In other words she had always made a feint at carrying out her advertised intentions. Her open admission of the ruse savored somehow of Lily's frankness. It was a new phase of Madeline and a disturbing one. It awoke in Hugh a troublesome inquietude, a dim and desperate hunger for her, a doubt of his understanding her at all, which was as painful as the probe of a long steel knife in his heart.

"Madeline!" He caught up with her and, taking her arm, bent low to her. He felt her stiffen, as he had expected her to relax. The doubt and pain deepened.

"Hugh," she began breathlessly, "I wanted to speak to you alone because—

because I have something important to say."

"Yes, dear." He still held her arm, although she remained unresponsive.

"Hugh—when you couldn't take me to tea to-day I called up Paul and asked him to," she said.

The simplicity and seriousness of her confession amused and relieved him.

"There was no harm in that, dear. I suppose, instead of taking you to tea, he took you for a ride."

"How did you know?" she demanded, startled.

"He was going to borrow Fred Carey's car to-day."

"Yes—we went for a ride." She seemed to find it difficult to continue, and he thought her silence was due to her having nothing more to say. "We met Terry Raccini and gave her a lift home. I made her show Paul some of her work," she went on at last, conversationally.

"Did he like it?" asked Hugh in the same vein.

"Yes," she answered absently. Then, suddenly, her voice changed; her accents became almost frightened. "Hugh, no good can come to us unless we are honest with each other."

"That is the only way."

"Even if it hurts. I am going to hurt you, Hugh."

He felt the increasing pressure of his fingers on her soft flesh, and, realizing that he was bruising it, he dropped her arm. The next moment her hand fluttered upward toward his shoulders, with a gesture tender and uncertain, soothing and reluctant.

"Hugh—dear Hugh—I have never had a brother. I did not know one could love a brother so deeply. I—I love you—that way—Hugh."

They had stopped dead, facing each other now, with the moonlight adding mystery, instead of light, to their searching eyes.

"I do not understand you, Madeline,"

said Hugh at last, heavily. He knew he was lying and that she must know it, too. He understood too well.

"I had not found out what real love—no, this is no less real, only different. Let me say: I did not know what the sort of love I should have felt for you, to marry you, was like. I have found out now. In time, Hugh. We can be thankful for that. I want to ask you—now—to release me."

"Release?" The word stuck in Hugh's throat. He remained silent a moment, gaining control over the forces surging within him. When he spoke, it was with a calmness that satisfied him. "When did you learn this?" he asked. "Who has taught you? Or was it just a revelation?"

"I learned it this last week," answered Madeline, after a pause. There was dignity in her candor, a dignity the keener-edged for being unblamable and rendering her so. "I learned it—since—Paul came back."

"You are in love with my brother Paul?" He could not believe she would say "yes." He could not conceive of the falling of a blow so crushing, there in this quiet, night-shrouded garden, under the high indifference of the unchanging skies. Yet he had to ask to make sure.

"Yes, Hugh," she said softly, "I am in love with your brother Paul."

Until she said it, he could not measure how impossible it had seemed to him. It came to him like sudden death.

"He is nearer your age," was all he could say. It was the last thing he intended to say, or that he had even been thinking of.

"Perhaps that is why we are closer," she said in much the same manner, mechanically, as if her tongue gave voice to unimportant words against her will. Then she drew herself up sharply. "I love him," she repeated.

The words awakened him from his lethargy. The fever to deny unpleasant

truths, to call life a lie because it did not harmonize, to blame some one, was old in him—a habit not easily broken.

"You believe in Paul!" he cried bitterly. "The man who would deceive his brother and rob him——"

"What do you mean?" demanded Madeline in freezing anger.

"Paul—my brother, whom I trusted, made love to—won you!"

"No! No! Hugh, must you be spared nothing? I loved him right away, long before—before"—she caught her breath—"before I knew he wasn't you."

"It is not I you are anxious to spare, Madeline," he said steadily.

"Hugh, you must not ask for it all. I cannot tell you. My heart is no longer yours, and if I were to try to reveal to you what is written upon it, it would not be intelligible to you, and I should always be shamed by the memory of my attempt. Can't you see, Hugh, the possibility of my even thinking this is the proof that it is so?"

"Has Paul told you he loves you?"

"To-day. All week I wanted to hear him say it," answered Madeline gently. "I tried to make him say it. I—said it first."

"Madeline! *You!*"

"Paul could never have said that in that way," said Madeline. "Hugh, dear, please, please release me! I am not equal to your ideals."

"Madeline, we are engaged. It is almost as sacred as marriage. This is mere infatuation. How can you think—in a week——"

"In a moment, Hugh. I knew right away. I knew those days I fought with the thought; when I tried to fool myself into believing that it was because I saw you in him that I was constantly seeing him in my mind's eye. Before I knew that I recalled you, only to remember him clearer. The characteristics you shared were dearest to me, for upon them I built my memories, not

of you, but of him. The erect carriage of your shoulders—which he outdoes; the backward fling of your head—pride in you, and a sort of gay defiance in him; your eyes—in shape and color so alike, but yours merely kind and warming, while his could set alight a chain of bonfires leading to my heart."

"Madeline!" protested Hugh in anguish. "Do you not see that it is the fact that Paul was forbidden which attracts you?"

She seized his arms, trying to see him in the dark.

"Does it mean no more to you than that?" she gasped, horrified. "Sin! The dread beauty of sin! Oh, Hugh, do you realize what you have confessed?"

"I am telling you of life as I have known it. Trust me, Madeline. Give me the right to guard you. No, I won't blame Paul. He, too, is in the struggle."

For a moment, it seemed to him that she had yielded. He felt her slim, cold fingers steal into his hand, but it was to deposit there something slimmer and colder still. Involuntarily he clasped it—her engagement ring.

"I'm sorry, Hugh," she whispered, "but I do not pity you too deeply. You never loved me. You never loved any one, or you would have understood." The next moment, she seemed to melt from him into the dark, like foam fading on night waters.

"Madeline!" he cried desperately. "That is not true! Come back! I cannot release you!"

He followed quickly toward the house, but found her father alone. Mr. Bonser's question, "Where is Madeline?" showed she had escaped. Nor did Hugh see her again that night.

CHAPTER XIII.

There was a light in the library, which Hugh saw as he mounted the stairs, after letting himself into the house that evening. It was late for his father to

be up reading, but scarcely late enough to expect it to be Paul back after an evening's entertainment. It was, indeed, because he was sure it could not be Paul, that Hugh thrust back the portières and looked curiously into the room. Some one instantly called him by name.

Paul had risen at the sound of his footsteps, and stood gazing across the underglow of the lamp, toward the door.

"Hugh?" repeated Paul. His voice was gentle and questioning. There was no graceful withdrawal. Hugh stepped into the room, wondering how much of his scene with Madeline had been planned by both of them.

"Did you wish to speak to me, Paul?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Paul. "I wanted to tell you I had a telegram from the Cramptons. I am to start to-morrow night."

"Oh!" Hugh flushed suddenly. It was like the return of life after inanition. His hard mouth softened, his eyes glowed. "So soon?"

"Has Madeline spoken to you?" asked Paul directly.

"Did you not tell her to?" demanded Hugh, on guard again. "You should have waited."

"For the telegram? It came before I saw her. How much did she tell you?"

"You dared—knowing you were about to drop out of her life?"

"May it not have been that we were driven to verities by the dread that we were about to drop out of each other's lives?"

"You will not hold her to a declaration of an emotion that was but temporary?"

"That, Hugh, is what I am asking you." Paul spoke gravely and slowly.

"Madeline and I love one another. We fought against it, but it's no use. This message convinced us both how deep that love had grown. Madeline said to

tell you to-night, and she'll wait for me."

"Do you realize what you're saying, Paul, and to whom?"

"Yes. My brother—and her plighted husband, whom she never loved, because, Hugh, he did not know how to love her."

"You make some pretentious claims to understanding me," said Hugh, his voice still low and unwavering, although his face was very pale. Paul looked down at the table, fingering the edge of the book he had been reading.

"I asked you last night if you had been true to your engagement. You were not able to answer me," he said.

"What sort of love is that?"

"God!" gasped Hugh, suddenly rigid. "Did you dare—to think——"

"Whatever I thought, it gave me the chance to speak. Well, perhaps I should have spoken, anyway. You will not understand. Love is not conduct. One cannot guide the heart by the lamp of duty. If you and Madeline were married, and she and I had met, our love would have sprung up just the same, cramped and hurt, but vigorous, like grass between the cracks of a broken stone walk. Be glad we were spared that tragedy."

"You believe Madeline capable of such a sin, and yet profess to love her?"

"You believe her incapable of it, and yet profess to know what love is!" exclaimed Paul. "Oh, Hugh, whoever she is, that blond woman of the opera house—she will serve you as well as my Madeline, whom you would crush in a year!"

"Paul!" cried Hugh, tortured. "This is a fiendish mistake! The woman you speak of is nothing to me! I despise her! I have cause to know——" He caught himself up. "Madeline is mine! She shall marry me!" he went on in a different voice.

"Although she loves me? Although she has confessed to it?"

"She will love me again when you are gone."

"But I shall come back. Why sow the seeds of future despair? Face life. Face truth. Face nature. Let us have our freedom and joy, and let us love you for your generosity."

"It is you who will not face life and truth. It is not possible to fall in love in a week."

"Hugh, do you remember the group Madeline showed us, called 'Poverty?' The one she made in one day, the Saturday after I met her?"

"What of it?"

"She showed it to you, hoping you would get some hint of the truth from it. She scarcely dared to let me see it, for fear I would divine too much. It was you in your blindness who made her show it to me. Do you remember?"

"You've been speaking of this, and mocking at me."

"You believe that, and yet would marry her?" asked Paul scornfully. "No," he went on more gently. "I mentioned it to prove she knew by instinct, after but one day, upon the awakening of her heart, which of us could respond to her wholly. She wanted it to be you."

"Paul, haven't we had enough of this nonsense? I am as mad as you to take this seriously." Hugh rose as one shaking off the effects of a dream or the spell of a story.

"For God's sake, Hugh!" gasped Paul, growing pale with a mixture of anger and dismay. "Don't try to hide life behind a curtain of what you consider the proprieties! It's too big. Hugh, if you only could love! You thought I was joking when I wished I might deprive you of some of your inhibitions with drink. If you could only be human, if you could only be willing to be! Well, I see I might as well be arguing with the deaf. Good night, Hugh. This is our last talk for some

time. I wish we could have used the same language!" He held out his hand. His eyes were grave and direct.

Hugh, thankful that the interview had come to an end, clasped his brother's hand.

"Good night," he said.

Paul went slowly to the door. He hesitated as if he had something more to say, and then went out hopelessly. Hugh threw himself into the chair his brother had vacated. The whole evening seemed to him to have been exaggerated and unreal. Surely, anything so bewildering could have no real significance.

"They are young," he mused. "In a month we shall laugh at this."

Paul was going away to-morrow. Perhaps if they had been together more than a week, there might have been some danger. He understood well, indeed, how ardent are the passions of youth—and how evanescent. Paul little knew whom he was accusing of coldness. These are the apparent tragedies which the years convert to comedy.

At last, reassured and trusting to the well-known powers of time and absence, Hugh got up and stretched himself like a man who had dropped a weary burden from his shoulders. Then he plunged his hands deep into his pockets.

The little finger of his right hand accidentally threaded a thin circlet of gold. He drew out Madeline's engagement ring and stood staring at it with a renewed twinge of dread.

He would not feel perfectly safe until it was again in her possession.

CHAPTER XIV.

Paul's appearance at breakfast bore out Hugh's optimism of the night before. He looked thoroughly normal, as happy as usual, and seemingly absorbed in the excitement of embarking that night on his new enterprise. His was no love-ravaged physiognomy. Hugh

smiled at the boyish wholesomeness of his brother. To-morrow or the next day, when Paul was gone, he planned to win back Madeline's erring affections with a tender consideration which she would be unable to resist.

He had forgotten all about Lily and her affairs, and when a telephone message came from her to the office, that afternoon, he recalled them with a guilty start. Lily's voice was full of happy excitement.

"Irene's come home," she told him. "Things are going to be all right. Please come up as soon as you can. I got a surprise for you!"

He gave her a curt "All right," preferring not to ask questions over the phone. But he decided to go to Lily's as early as possible to atone to her for his apparent unfriendliness, and to ease his conscience for an unseemly lack of interest in Irene's fate.

As he was about to go out, the office boy approached him.

"Mr. Paul left this for you, sir," he said, handing him a letter.

"Paul?" Hugh's heart leaped with a suspicion of ill luck. "When?"

"To-day at noon," answered the boy, with the veiled defiance of one who invites a reproof, having his excuses in prime condition.

"Why didn't he come in to see me? Was I out?"

"No, sir."

"And he left—— Why didn't you bring me this at once?"

The boy looked triumphant.

"Because he gave me strict orders not to. I wasn't to give you this until just before you was leaving the office."

Instinct warned Hugh not to open the note before the boy, and by no means to exhibit his annoyance and astonishment. He nodded and went out.

While he waited for the elevator he read the note. It said:

DEAR HUGH: Madeline and I were married at city hall this morning, and Made-

line is coming with me to Mexico. You can't say we didn't try to go at it more conventionally. Don't take it too hard, old man! We're going to break the news at home about six o'clock. Our train leaves at eight-thirty, so it will be a sort of engagement and marriage reception in one. The two Bonser ladies ought to be worth seeing on the occasion; but if you don't want to come, we'll understand. Our hope is that some day you'll realize we can and do love you. In other words, that some day you will discover how far from the truth you have been in believing Madeline should have been your wife. She is as glad to be your sister as I am to be your brother, PAUL.

Hugh finished the note in the descending lift. He thought it was making him faint, but what he really felt was the downward drop of the car. He went his way dizzily, with unseeing eyes and a curious numbness, as if, in self-defense, his emotions failed to respond to the occasion. He kept repeating to himself: "Madeline is married to Paul," and found it left no impression upon his brain. Then came an extraordinary notion. Of course, Madeline was married to Paul. He had known it for weeks.

He had mechanically taken the elevated train uptown, and got off at Eighth Street, his proper station. As he drew near Washington Square, those cells in his brain, sensitive to the idea of duty, awoke to the fact that he had a visit to pay to Lily Binney. His whole being revolted, but his well-trained feet turned him into the proper path.

A maid with a flushed, cheerful face opened the door to him.

"I'll tell Mrs. Binney it's you. She's awful anxious to see you," she said, and rushed down the hall, abandoning all formality.

Lily, festively arrayed, instantly appeared, her face luminous with joy.

"She's married," she announced. "They had the license when I phoned you. It's all fixed up fine. Honest, Hugh, he's not half bad!"

"Married?" The word awoke painful

vibrations within him. "I thought he had a wife already."

"No, never! He just was against it on principle. Oh, I understand it. He's an artist and different from us. No, I can't say *us*. You're different again, and there's no chance of your seeing it at all. But he's mighty fond of Irene, and, of course, the money is a big item."

"Money! Did you offer that little beast money to marry her?"

"No, but I'm not blind. He knows she has money—at least, *I* have, and it's the same thing. Say, there's no harm in marrying money, especially when it means so much to him. He don't have to worry now; he can just go ahead and paint."

"Lily, this is horrible!" Hugh's mind was torn from its private moorings in his amazement and disgust. "How can you respect a man who acts like that?"

"Respect nothing! The main thing is to try to keep him straight. He's young, Hugh."

"That's a man's chief virtue in a woman's eyes!" cried Hugh with a sudden, deep bitterness.

"Why, Hugh!" She gazed at him with parted lips. "Have I done anything wrong? Isn't it better that she married him?"

"For money?"

"Well, at that, he may stick to her longer and more faithful for money than for love. He hasn't found love so awful binding. And who am I to judge him, Hugh? I married Lem Binney for money myself."

"A woman is different."

"How is a woman different? Do you really think she has less chance of being unfaithful if she wants to be?" She laughed shortly. "Well, I'm glad they're properly married, and I'm going to make a man of Ralph if I can."

"You talk bravely, Lily."

"I talk sense. Don't waste time blubbing over the past. You helped me a lot, Hugh, when I was pretty down

and out. I'd like to show you *now* I've got some gratitude, in case you ever need me to help you." She put her hand on his arm. "Hugh, your wife needn't be jealous of me; I won't get mushy again."

"My wife?" repeated Hugh, against his will.

Her face hardened at the odd note in his tone.

"I see. You mean she won't get the chance? I'm not to meet her?"

"No—at least"—Hugh braced himself—"my engagement—is—broken."

She turned swiftly away, and he saw the flush steal up her neck to her ears. Then, as quickly, she turned back, her eyes more brilliant than ever, joyously compassionate.

"Hugh, you mean— Poor Hugh! Are you awfully hurt? What can I say? I knew something was wrong. God sent me to you. I'm here."

She held out her arms to him, suddenly silent. For a moment, he saw in her the comforter, the mother, the woman, with love ablaze in her pityingly triumphant gaze. A wave seemed to sweep him forward into the soft shelter of her arms, but he held back rigidly, his spirit torn by self-denial. Across the park, the woman he had been plighted to was receiving congratulations on her wedding with his brother. His mind flashed the picture before him, to taunt him with the knowledge that he was an unmoved witness of his own tragedy. Only—he could not turn it into farce, like this!

"I am not hurt," he lied desperately. And then, feeling that anything more he said would be mere nonsense, he said, "I must go."

"Won't you see Irene to congratulate her? They're in her room, packing for a regular honeymoon this time." She had that charming habit of abandoning a hopeless topic without apparent regret.

"I'll—I'll wait till they come back.

"But I wish you joy, Lily." He held out his hand, and she took it with unmistakable wistfulness in her upturned face. A second Hugh, far off, appraised and got comfort from that look. It was a defense against Madeline and Paul. A woman *could* love him!

Then he walked doggedly to his own house. It never occurred to him to dodge the unpleasantness of this extraordinary marriage reception. He was no coward, and courage, however perverted, has its dignity.

He was protected by a continued numbness, as his intelligence refused to digest what went on before him. He used what consciousness he had of his surroundings in avoiding private conversations with either Paul or Madeline, in whose faces he read an anxiety to talk with him—to explain and to convince. He went to the train with his father and Mr. Bonser, the latter, flustered to a point of intoxication, by the sheer romance of the event.

Paul managed at last to grasp his brother by the arm.

"I could wish you were suffering, Hughie!" he said strangely. "It would be a sign you are alive."

Hugh dully shook himself free.

CHAPTER XV.

As a matter of fact, Hugh believed he was suffering just as he knew he was alive. He thought there was no pain that could hurt more than the dead emptiness of the days that followed—the constantly pursuing vision of something which at times he identified as a sense of shame. Shame for what? When he faced his visitation squarely, it was impossible to call it by any name. Paul and Madeline, doubtless to vindicate themselves, had cast upon him a consciousness of guilt; their act was to punish some lack in him. He was still hypnotized by their power of suggestion,

although careful analysis showed him no lack.

They believed he could not love, because he was not hot-headed and demonstrative, because he refused to mistake for love something that all his training conspired to convince him was unspeakably low. What they blamed him for, then, was what he knew to be a virtue, hard won in the battle of life. He should be proud, not apologetic, and accept this new blow as merely another buffet in that same battle. He could almost persuade himself to take satisfaction in his wounds, but the healthy, earnest face of his brother, stern and tender, rose to chide him when he sought the consolation of pride.

Two weeks wore on. The park became clear and vital green, with the magic transparency of the slenderly decorated April trees. One or two warm days, softening the asphalt, drawing lazy loiterers under the shade in the old park, and radiating like thin water from metal roofs, proclaimed the advance of summer, and on one of these days Hugh woke up.

At first, he was aware of mental anguish, not unlike physical pain. Then he became haunted with devils. It was not alone that he wanted Madeline, and was frantic to lay violent hands upon his brother; but, to his horror, he discovered in himself a longing for almost every woman he saw, and a murderous that this was madness. That only awoke antipathy for nearly every man.

It was in vain that he told himself in him an actual dread of insanity. He plunged into his work to keep his mind occupied, but vile, strange fancies pursued him, wrecking his concentration and destroying his self-respect. There were occasions on which he would go to the nearest mirror, sure that he had altered outwardly, that he must show some hideous marks of the hellish conflict within him. The change he expected to find was so great that he

missed the change that was actually taking place—an increasing gauntness, dark lines and feverish eyes.

He instinctively longed for open fields or the sea, or the deep tranquillity of untracked woods. But not only did he distrust this longing as a new bedevilment—the deadly sin of sloth, to add to the others—but business was in a condition that forbade his considering it at all. The office was piled up with work, and his father was away, and although Mr. Morriver was scarcely more than nominal head of the firm, it was a tradition that Hugh must remain at his post in his absence.

One evening, as Hugh was crossing the Square on his way home, a fair-haired young woman bowed and smiled to him, in passing. He returned her bow, without recognizing her, but recalled the incident and was able to place her as Irene Binney, when Lily Binney called him up at his office next day.

"You said you practiced real-estate law," she told him. "I'm thinking of buying some property out in Jersey. There may be some trouble about the title. It's part of a farm. Can you come up with me Sunday to see it? I have a car now, and it's a grand ride! Irene and Ralph will be along. Ralph runs the car."

He was about to feign a Sunday date, but, after all, he dreaded these spring week-ends, which he usually spent in unprofitable visiting of people he cared nothing about. The country repeated its call, and he decided to go.

The next day it rained, and Saturday was cloudy, with intermittent downpours. When Sunday's morning skies showed leaden through the green of the park trees, Hugh, looking out of his bedroom windows, doubted the possibility of the day's excursion. In his doubt lurked relief. He really had no desire to spend the day with Lily. They were to leave about two in the afternoon, and he occupied the morning with

briefs. Suddenly, as he sat working, through the open window there crept some glimmers of pale sunlight.

He looked out.

The clouds were breaking, the park lay wetly gleaming, under the increasing brightness of the atmosphere, the soaked grass looked poisonously green, and little mounds of earth, broken twigs, torn buds, and bits of blossoms littered the dark, paved walks. A robin darted to a tree near by and freed that unforgettable call, poignant with the memories of previous springs and the hopes of full days to come.

Hugh stood very quiet, staring at the bird, who repeated the call twice, as if he were delivering an important message and wished it to be apprehended exactly. It seemed to Hugh that it only needed special concentration to put it into words. Some one less harassed than he could easily translate it. But, even he knew it was a cheerful message.

He found himself watching with pleasure the spreading patch of blue among the clouds.

CHAPTER XVI.

They called for Hugh a little after two. It was Ralph Benchley who rang the bell, looking like a chauffeur rather than an artist, and improved by the transformation. He sat in front with his young wife, radiantly pretty, in a demure motor coat and bonnet. Her mother, in back, also becomingly and appropriately attired, beamed upon Hugh a broad, kindly smile, as gracious and guileless as the blue sky above. Hugh was to sit with her.

He had dreaded meeting her and the provocation of her eyes and person, but now, he saw that dread as a creature of the foul darkness into which his mind had fallen these latter days.

Strangely enough, her presence actually seemed to release him from the

preoccupation of sex—she, Lily Grop-
per, whose effect on him had always
been the opposite! When she laughed
her deep, hearty laugh, with the tears
running down her cheeks, trifles became
instantly comic, because of her amuse-
ment. Her attention was always alert
as a child's, and her interest in what
they passed was unquenchable. She
kept Ralph laughing with her or trying
to cap her merry remarks with a whim-
sey of his own of which, to Hugh's
amazement, he had quite a store. Mean-
time, Irene, placidly happy, a little dull
with her wide, gentle smile, added a
note of quiet to the party.

It was like convalescence to Hugh.
He emerged from the distortion and un-
reality of the past weeks master of his
thoughts and commander of the black
depths of his soul.

The farm Lily wanted to buy was off
the State road, and they had not gone
far into the byways before they discov-
ered that the recent rains had made them
impassable. Some two miles from their
destination, they foundered and stuck.
The afternoon was beautiful, and Lily
was for leaving the car and walking
the rest of the way. Finally, it was de-
cided, after they got the car free, that
Ralph and Irene should take it back to
good roads, and Lily and Hugh, when
they had looked over the farm, should
go home by train.

The latter stopped at the nearest habi-
tation to ask the way. It turned out
to be a sort of inn, and, although it was
Sunday, there hung about the stuffy lit-
tle room an air of illicit goings-on. Idle
men sat about on board chairs, around
a conspicuously empty table. An unno-
ticed playing card lay on the dusty floor.
The proprietor of the place, standing be-
hind a small counter, told them, with
much interruption from his guests, how
to proceed.

It was warm and Lily had thrown
open her motoring coat. On her breast
glittered a handsome diamond bar pin.

At her neck were more diamonds, in a
lavallière. They attracted Hugh's atten-
tion as evidence of bad taste, before he
saw the hungry look in the eyes of the
men who stared at them. Lily, appar-
ently enjoying the sensation they caused,
decided to add to it by removing her
gloves and displaying more jewels.
Hugh took her to task for it when they
got outside, but she only laughed.

"What are diamonds for—to hide?"

But, as they were picking their way
over a deserted and lonely bit of road,
she was the first to notice that some one
was following them.

He was an ugly, desperate-looking
creature, large and heavily built, and
with the abnormally irregular features
of the mentally defective. Lily's vanity
had awakened malignant admiration in
dangerous quarters. He seemed to
know the way and gauged his approach
so as to gain on them when they were
quite out of reach of assistance.

Lily seemed more thrilled than fear-
ful. Now and then she would giggle:
"What shall we do?" while regarding
Hugh with bright, anxious eyes. He
reassured her, saying that the man could
not possibly mean to hold them up in
broad daylight.

A particularly bad part of the high-
way caused Hugh to give his whole at-
tention to helping Lily keep her bal-
ance on the wet and slippery bank above
the inundated road. The man behind
them quickened his pace with a sudden,
clumsy, and ferocious alacrity, and drew
from his pocket something which he
swung above his head. Lily saw the re-
flection of his action in the puddle below
her and uttered a cry of warning to
Hugh who dodged just in time. He re-
leased her, to grapple with their assail-
ant, who had again raised his weapon.
Lily, unsupported, slid down the bank,
landing on her knees in the dark-brown
water. A moment later, there was an-
other splash, as the two men inadver-
tently followed her.

Hugh had caught the ruffian by the arm and had wrenched away his black-jack, which disappeared in the muddy pool. They simultaneously regained their feet, and the man landed a heavy blow on Hugh's jaw which set his head singing. Then the pain, the shock, and the unexpected indignity of the whole incident infuriated him. Hugh became a brute like his opponent, but, being in a better physical condition, well fed and more intelligent, he was soon battering a beaten foe with the lust to hurt and destroy which is distinct from the more civilized aim of achieving a victory. Lily herself interposed between them.

"Hugh, you'll kill him!"

"Why not?" demanded Hugh, snarling.

"Let him go—for my sake—Hugh!"

To discommodate him, she threw herself upon his breast. The contact of her soft body had a subduing effect upon him. His arms closed about her. He was dazed, puzzled, and withal, flattered by this intervention, almost wifely in its method. Subconsciously, he judged it ridiculous, and, to cover the situation, in savage tones he told his late combatant to be up and off. Claspings Lily tightly, he watched the wretch rise and limp away at an increasing speed.

"Hugh," murmured Lily, against his chest, "you're smothering me."

He looked down and saw her hat askew, her cheeks streaked with mud, and her hair in wild disorder. Her eyes were glowing and her parted lips smiled. Slowly he lowered his head to hers and beheld the curious expression of both fear and triumph in her face. That triumph he felt was rightly his, the intoxication of conquest, as he crushed her lips beneath his own.

So they stood, a symbolistic group wrapped in earth's own age-long and omnipotent ecstasy.

"Lily," he whispered at last, with drugged eyes. "Lily!"

"Oh, Hugh!" She was weeping.

"I've wanted you *so!* I've loved you all my life—and you need me, Hughie. Don't you? Don't you need me?"

"Lily!" he repeated stupidly.

"You don't need to say you love me! I know it ain't that," said Lily simply.

He tried to unlock his arms from her, but could not.

"You must not talk like that!" he protested.

"But you don't love me, Hugh!"

"Yes—yes! This is love! You must marry me, Lily, now. Right away—to-day!"

"Hugh, you're foolish! It's Sunday, and we got no license, and, anyway—you'd be sorry to-morrow morning. No, I won't marry you, Hugh."

"You must! I can't do without you! We must marry." He shook his head. He spoke with the solemn obstinacy of a drunkard.

She tried to release herself, but he held her closer, and she laughed a little and then burst into hysterical tears.

"You said you loved me!" he protested.

"I do, I do, my dear. I love you too much to burden you with the wrong sort of wife."

"You'll be the right wife for me! I should have married you twenty years ago. Come—we'll find a parson somewhere."

"You're a fool!" she sobbed helplessly, as with his arm clamped powerfully about her, he led her on. "You're a fool, darling—and so am I! But I do love you!"

CHAPTER XVII.

They were married by a smirking little clergyman, the only busy man in the nearest village that quiet Sunday afternoon. The clergyman's wife confined her witnessing of the ceremony to an amazed scrutiny of their clothes. Lily protested to the last, but succeeded only in making Hugh promise to tell no one of their marriage. She predicted

that he would want a divorce sooner or later and that this was the way to avert a scandal.

"Hughie," she kept saying, "it's not square to you! I feel like I was taking advantage of a man not quite in his right mind."

In consenting to secrecy, Hugh was sanctioning a doubt in his own heart, a doubt that was partly the memory of his revulsion in the past, on his return from the glamour of her presence to the staid realities of his home surroundings. As a matter of fact, he waited days for that revulsion, but it did not come. He found himself, when at work in his office, thinking of Lily as a free gift of nature, like health or spring or the buffeting sea. He had been so keyed up to a superrefinement, that the release of the pendulum, so to speak, led him to rejoice in the very crudeness which might have repelled him. So was truth crude, and in Lily's broad humor, her unrestrained emotions, her very cultural ignorance, he found integrity and not a little charm.

Above all, she had brought him peace. Her wholesomeness robbed sex of the degradation with which he had so long associated it, and perhaps his seemingly rash decision to marry her had its share in cleansing it, in his legally biased mind, of any vestige of wrong. He fretted a little over her insistence that they keep their relationship hidden.

On her side, underestimating his real affection, she felt she was laying up trouble enough for herself without hastening the advent of the day on which he would be able to compare her with his social equals. And she was loath to sacrifice the fascination of the clandestine.

Irene and Ralph were the only ones they told about their marriage. About two weeks after the notable automobile trip, these two went to spend the summer in an artists' colony on the New England coast. Lily said she would join them later in the season, but that

artists bored her a little and she preferred New York in June.

After a hot spell in July, when the office was dull, Mr. Morriver grew anxious over the fact that Hugh had taken no vacation. That decided Hugh. The thought of roughing it in open country with Lily went to his head.

"Very well," he said to his father, "I shall start for the Maine woods Monday with my wife."

It was hardly the sort of wedding announcement Paul or Mr. Morriver or any one else would have expected of the conventional Hugh. Nor, thought the dazed old man, when Hugh insisted on taking him around to Lily's apartment, was she the sort of wife. He wrote to Paul a few days after:

You'll be astonished, I'm afraid, by Mrs. Hugh Morriver. She's a rather common woman, who paints and has bleached hair. It was quite a blow to me when I first saw her. Frankly, I wondered what the servants would say of her, and, after she had been here, I contrived delicately to question Nancy and Andrew. They are, of course, astounded, although they very properly conceal the fact, and are not so hostile as I expected. They find her "comical," and their most complimentary tribute is that she does not "put on airs." She has a good heart, no doubt, and Hugh seems extraordinarily happy and satisfied. I am quite at a loss to know what to say or think. She is not young, thank God! She has a married daughter. And she doesn't appear to be addicted to drink.

Fortunately, this letter was supplemented by one from Hugh himself, the nearest thing to a real confiding which Hugh had ever made to his brother. He wrote it in the woods, sitting beside the lake, glancing up now and then to Lily, where she nodded sleepily over a novel, but always caught his loving gaze with a kindling of her great, kind eyes. He gave her the letter to read, before sealing it, and watched her slow perusal till she put it down and turned and buried her face against the fallen stump which had supported her. In a

moment, he was beside her, and drew her head to his breast, without a word.

"Hugh, am I really that to you? Do you really, really love me?" she asked through a happy rain of tears.

"I really, really love you, dear!"

She said no more then, but was particularly quiet all day, and he felt that she was brooding over something which excited her, but did not make her unhappy.

That night, in the uncertain glare of the camp fire, she told him what it was.

"I got a letter from Irene yesterday."

"Yes, dear. Don't you remember you read it to me?"

"Not all of it. I didn't tell you—she's going to have a baby."

He smiled and drew her hand into his.

"I'm very glad. But why this sudden—reticence?" he asked.

"I'm going to be a grandmother," she said, after a pause.

"My foolish Lily! Do you think that makes you any older or that you would seem any older to me?"

She raised her hand and drew his face close to hers, but held him back when he attempted to kiss her.

"Hughie," she said in an odd voice, "Irene has got nothing on me."

"Lily!" he gasped, when the truth finally made some impression upon him. "You—we—are going to have— Oh, why didn't you let me know before?"

She patted his head where it lay on her shoulder.

"Well," she said whimsically, "you see, I thought it would add to my importance to be able to tell you I was going to be a mother and a grandmother at the same time."



SOUVENIR

JUST a rainy day or two,
In a windy tower;
That was all I had of you,
Saving half an hour

Marred by greeting passing groups,
In a cinder walk,
Near some naked blackberry hoops,
Dim with purple chalk.

I can think of three or four
Things you said in spite,
And an ugly coat you wore,
Plaided black and white.

Just a rainy day or two,
And a bitter word—
Why do I remember you
As a singing bird?

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY.



The Man of the "Chat Noir"

By Phyllis Bottome

Author of "A Servant of Reality," etc.

IT is odd how little people look like their histories. On one occasion, I was staying in a hotel at the same time as a public character who had involved England in a serious small war.

He was pointed out to me by the waiter—just the kind of man you would have supposed—a big, hulking fellow with a black beard and most ferocious eyes.

I made his acquaintance and led the conversation tactfully round to the country he had overturned. He looked very vague and made a practical, but uninteresting, statement about the price of bullocks.

I discovered afterward that he was a farmer, and that the gentleman who had really caused the war was a small, white-haired, shrinking person who looked like a rabbit and drank nothing but milk.

Nor was there anything at all peculiar about my table companion at the Chat Noir. I always go to the Chat Noir for my meals in Paris, partly because the prices are modest and the cooking beyond reproach, and also because the world one sees there is purely French, of a quiet, discreet kind; which is not, perhaps, actually discreet, but never appears to go beyond discretion.

My table companion was of precisely this description and I did not give him as much as a thought, until the night of the armistice.

The café was full, and all the people had that look of surprised and almost humble triumph which so soon changed

into arrogance and bad temper. Everybody had got something safe; even the deepest mourner realized that his dead had not died in vain; and no one had yet discovered how disintegrating small troubles can be when big ones have stopped.

But the Frenchman whose seat was opposite mine did not share that relieved, slightly bewildered look. He was very quiet, quieter than any Frenchman I have ever met; but he wasn't pleased.

He came in as usual, hung his hat on the wall, turned the tap of the cuvette over his hands, and sat down at our table, without smiling.

His head was bent, and I found it curiously difficult to tell his age from his features. They were a little blurred, and when I thought about him afterward, it was only to remember that he had very deep-set, sunken eyes. He had a way, too, of looking at his food as if it were dust.

I have always made a study of people's families, and it struck me that, although he was shabbily dressed and inconspicuous looking, he must have come from a good family. He had little, unconscious ways that only people used to a certain social position affect; and, although he gave very small tips, the waiters obeyed his nod in a flash.

We had not spoken before, beyond a formal bow, and to wish each other a good appetite; but I could not sit in silence on so tremendous an occasion.

The whole café was in a hubbub of

delighted sound, and the patron had brought out free champagne.

"I am English, monsieur," I observed, "and, as an ally of your famous nation, it would give me great pleasure to shake hands and to drink to the perpetual welfare of both our countries."

He raised his eyes and looked at me. It was a perfectly steady look and without fear, but it was the kind of glance that seems to sum up a man's chances, as if all his faculties were on the alert and judging whether they were to be called out or not. A captain who expects a collision at sea would look as he did, the moment before the collision took place.

Then he answered me in perfect English.

"I am very happy," he said, "to have the opportunity of drinking to your country and of thanking you for the good wishes you have spared for mine."

I said something about the making of history, and he smiled a curious, tired smile and said:

"History that is made out of guns is not very intelligent."

I am not a jingo, but I thought his remark was out of place at the moment.

"I am particularly happy to be in Paris just now," I said, "for, without underestimating the parts we have each of us played in the war, France has been the heart, and it is to the heart one likes to turn at such a historic time!"

I looked around me as I spoke. There was an old man at the next table, weeping quietly—he had the Légion ribbon in his coat, and had lost an only son—but for the moment he was not unhappy; and a mother sat hand in hand with a big, young *poilu*, both of them laughing, with the tears running down their cheeks, but quite unaware of their tears; it was that kind of joy.

I counted the *militaires* in the restaurant—twelve men, all young, who

needn't die in a few weeks or days, and the light of it was in all their faces.

But, in the face of the man opposite me there was no answering light.

"Ah, yes," he said in answer to my words, "Paris, as monsieur justly observes, is the heart, and in six months she will be the greedy, discontented, rather vindictive heart of our *belle alliance*. The tears will have dried then, and you will not hear any more laughter.

"There is one thing that never lasts, monsieur; it decays as quickly as bread—and that is human gratitude. Dogs remember, but men forget!

"It is true that the war has stopped, but there are one or two little evils which will still go on. Such as egoism, for instance; greed, for instance; tyranny, for instance.

"To-morrow these people will remember they have lost nearly half their natural wealth and more than a million of their young men. They will reckon up what they have left, and try to produce more, at each other's expense; and the dead men— Ah, well, the dead men have paid for this war—they are gone!" He made a strange little gesture, crumbling his bread and letting it slip through his fingers.

I think I said something about victory.

"Victory—yes!" he repeated. "And honor, yes! But these are things which live in the air and do not matter, compared to a corn on your foot, when it is stepped on.

"Monsieur, a hungry dog will not thank you for a silver collar, when he wants a bone. The little girl over there dancing on the table in white stockings and crying 'Victory' will not see that she gets very much out of it to-morrow. I doubt if she will find it pay for another pair of white silk stockings."

I was a little annoyed at his tone, and I said:

"But, surely, monsieur, even that lit-

the girl loves her country—she loves France; and, after all, victory means the safety of France."

"Ah, bah! Safety!" my companion said in his tired, soft voice. "That is a little thing which goes out as quickly as a match. But, forgive me, monsieur, I think I am rather outside the occasion. Let us drink to our two countries! I think your toast was their perpetual welfare?"

He raised his glass to mine, and when he had drunk it, he threw it over his shoulder and smashed it.

His gesture pleased the whole café. Every one decided to do the same. The room filled with the shrieks of excited girls and the clash of glasses. I found myself seized by both hands and made one of a moving circle, dancing and singing. I do not usually dance, for I am a bank manager, and very few bank managers dance compulsorily in cafés, and I never sing; but I believe I did both on this occasion, and when it stopped, I found my table companion had vanished.

He was there the next day, and we never failed to have a little friendly conversation together.

I found he had been everywhere. He was as familiar with Constantinople as if it were on Montparnasse, and India and China as if they were the suburbs of Paris. He had not been to America, he said, but he meant to go some day.

"I think it is the last place I shall go to," he said reflectively, "and that I shall not come back."

I told him I had once been there on business for several months and that I thought it a splendid and well-managed country, with an enormous commercial future.

"Commerce does not interest me," he said quietly. This statement surprised me, for I had by now settled that he was a superior kind of commercial traveler. A man as badly off as he ap-

peared to be could hardly have traveled so extensively in any other profession.

Another thing that I noticed about him was that he never mentioned any one's name.

I gave him every opportunity, for in my profession as a bank manager, names and the qualities which belong to them often play an important part. I have met a great many well-known people, and once I know a man's name, I can generally place him, and pick up some mutual tie. But my table companion never mentioned his or any one else's name.

When I gave him my card, with my London and Paris addresses on it, and asked for his own, he told me he hadn't a card, and that his name was Adolphe Fleuret; and, of course, Fleuret is not a name. He added, after a short pause, that he was a professor of archæology.

Shortly after this, he stopped coming. I waited a few days and then asked the patron where my former table companion lived.

The patron lifted his expansive shoulders and shook an emphatic, but non-committal head.

"Monsieur means his compatriot who speaks like a Frenchman?" he demanded. "He came in and went out like a bird—I do not know where he lives. But, however, he paid punctually."

"But surely," I exclaimed, "he is a Frenchman! He is certainly not an Englishman!"

"Frenchman—ah! I think not," observed the patron. "But there are many strangers now in Paris—he may, for all I know, be an Arab! But I thought he was an Englishman!"

"He speaks English extraordinarily well," I acknowledged, "but he isn't English. You know, there is something a little flat in his way of expressing himself, which a compatriot would not use."

"But that," returned the patron, "is

precisely the way he speaks French, for a foreigner almost to perfection. But, you understand, even you who speak so well yourself, monsieur, it is not quite the same thing—a little something escapes. Besides, has monsieur ever seen a Frenchman look at a pretty woman as if she were something that had inadvertently got between him and the light?

I assured myself that it was the phlegm of the Anglo-Saxon, but one of my countrymen—no! That would be asking too much of the imagination!

"The little one's heart was broken—she rushed out to buy a new hat. But that, too, passed him. It is quite possible he was an Arab—I understand their women wear veils, not hats."

I saw nothing more of Monsieur Fleuret for over a year; then, one evening, it was Boxing Day, and I was in my London flat, when I heard my electric bell.

It was late for a visitor, and snowing hard. Mr. and Mrs. Bounce, my caretakers, had asked for permission to spend the evening with a married daughter, so there was nothing for it but to go to the door myself, and there stood Adolphe Fleuret, covered with snow.

I took him in, settled him before the fire, and poured out a stiff grog.

"You ought to have let me know you were coming," I said reproachfully. "If it hadn't been for an accident, I should have been staying with friends in the country over Boxing Day, and if it had not been Boxing Day I might have been at work."

Adolphe Fleuret covered me with his steady, slightly ironic glance.

"Ah," he said, "but in England it is always Boxing Day, and I live on accidents. I had an idea that you would have a cat, and I see that you have a very fine one."

Paul, my blue Persian, was sitting in an armchair opposite me. I had to re-

move him for my visitor, and I expected him to show great annoyance, for he resented changes and never expressed a preference for any human being except Mrs. Bounce, and only for Mrs. Bounce when she was dealing directly with milk or fish; but he was voluntarily rubbing his handsome arched back against Monsieur Fleuret's leg and purring with a deep, reverberating pur.

"You seem extraordinarily fond of animals," I said, "and even insects. Do you remember at the Chat Noir when I wanted to kill a cockroach, you stopped me by saying you had seen too many things killed?"

"Did I say that?" he asked. "It was a slip, a weakness. But I was not very strong just then in Paris. It is more than a year now. Do you remember how I prophesied to you then the evils that would follow war? You have noticed all these troubles since? And you have recognized the spites, the resentments, the suspicions? Look ahead and ask yourself—is it peace, then, you have got? Ah, my friend, the world is just as it was before the war, which gave you victory, only it is weaker! Some who held good cards then hold bad cards now—that is the only difference. Shall I show you my bad hand?"

"You were friendly and agreeable to me in Paris, also you were, unconsciously perhaps, very useful. I left abruptly without a farewell, but I said to myself: 'If the occasion arises, I will go to him and relieve his curiosity. I owe him something, and I will pay my debt like that.'

"How did I know you were curious? Ah, you are discreet, and, like all the English, you see that there is somewhere for you to put your foot before you lean your weight on it; and I saw that you were looking for somewhere to put your foot. I could not satisfy your curiosity in Paris—that would have been very inconvenient to me. Not only would I have been killed—what is

in you English say?—like a shot, but what I was doing would have stopped.

"I am not one of those who die in their beds, but I was anxious about my work. As far as I could do it in Paris, it is done. And in England, it is also done. Now there is America. There may be something there, also, for me to do. To-morrow I shall go and find out; and I shall not return.

"But first, I will tell you anything you like to know. I will drink your very fine whisky and I will stroke your very handsome cat. Cats are the most discreet of animals. I think they have no hearts, but soft coats. What a philosophy! And how unfortunate that some of us have to part first with our hearts, and then with our soft coats, before we find it out!

"You were so kind once as to give me your card, and, in return, permit me to give you this little remembrance of myself, but I fear it will not remind you very much!"

He put a photograph into my hand. It would have been quite safe for him to carry it about with him even if he was in danger of being searched, because I never saw any one more unlike him than the man in the photograph.

He was young and very handsome, and dressed in a once-famous uniform. He held his fine, wild head high. Under the photograph, I read the signature, written in a bold, dashing hand. I will not write his name even now; but every one knew it. It was the name of one of the Russian archdukes, a first cousin of the czar's.

I had read of his assassination in the papers—a queer, horrible story; less queer, less horrible than the truth.

I looked at the face before me; the livid, blurred face and the sunk head. I tried to distinguish the features and, as I tried, Monsieur Adolphe Fleuret rose to his feet, lifted his bent head, and gazed back at me, until something—a little spark of likeness; as much as there

is between a shadow and him who casts it—came out at me from the photograph.

I think what I missed most in the figure before me was the look of arrogance. The young man in the photograph had his foot on the neck of the world, and the man in front of me had the foot of the world upon his neck. He had no arrogance in his eyes now, only that look as if what he saw in front of him were dust.

He sat down again and drank a glass of whisky. Then he said:

"Yes, that is what people would call—me! It has no more to do with me than it has to do with this very sleek fur animal purring at my knee. Only one little thread binds me to the young man in the picture—one very small thread. I think it is something which is alive in people after everything else is dead. Cut it, and all is over—which, perhaps, is best. This little thread is called *Revenge*, monsieur—*Revenge*!"

He was stroking Paul as he spoke, and he said the word as quietly as if it were a caress; and yet, it took my breath away. There was behind his voice something as accurately fatal as prussic acid.

"I make no complaints," he went on slowly, "and I try only to hurt the precise thing which I wish to hurt. Probably the lot of the peasants in Russia was bad. The court also was corrupt, a little more corrupt than courts usually are. The czar was too good a man in his private life to see very much beyond it. Family men do not make the best kings. We used to joke about it among ourselves, for strict domesticity was not normal in our family. Some of us thought, too, that the influence which played upon him was not altogether wholesome. It is doubtful if the influence of a very good, very narrow-minded woman with a strong will, is ever wholesome.

"The rest of us were rich and gay.

I had myself twenty households, and I do not know how much money. I never asked, but I spent what I wanted, and if I wanted more, I sold something. We made many people happy, I think, and—ah, yes—possibly a good many miserable. I did foolish things, and perhaps foolish things are always a little cruel.

"Then I married the most beautiful girl I could find of the rank into which I was obliged to marry. She was, as it happened, good, and not narrow. She had a very little head, but there were fine brains behind it.

"We started hospitals and schools; we improved most of the estates. She was the mother of my three children. A boy—that was necessary—and two girls. I do not know which I loved the most, but the youngest girl was the image of my wife. The eldest girl was seventeen, and she—the little Nathalie—was twelve. Our son was six years old when our world toppled over like a glass that has been filled a little too full.

"You would be surprised that anything which seemed so strong as that old régime could break so easily. But there is nothing so brittle or so tough as man!

"I was in the country at the time, about a hundred versts from Moscow. My wife and our three children were with me. I wanted them all to go, and I could have got them out of the country safely, but my wife would not leave me, and I did not think anything would happen to us in our country home.

"You see, we had given the people all they had—hospitals and schools—and, in the hardest winters, we saw to it that the worst evils of our country did not touch them. Not one child died because we did not care. I think there were not any of our people who would willingly have lifted their hands against us. But I had not counted on those who set fire to them as you light dry

straw with flame. I am told there are good Bolsheviks—possibly there are also good mad dogs—but one does not cultivate their society to find out.

"They came to our village, a little band of them, by night, and talked to our people. I do not know what they said—perhaps that we should drive them back into the trenches, or take away their land. It is easy to believe evil when you are ignorant.

"Russia was wild and these men gave poisoned teeth to it, and our peasants were bitter, and went mad. You are an Anglo-Saxon, and you know nothing about a people's madness. I have seen in a crowd in St. Petersburg, a student tear off another student's ear because he disagreed with his argument! They were intellectuals, but they were in a crowd. And our people were only peasants, but they also came upon us in a crowd.

"You have seen a Russian country house, perhaps? We were there for the summer months, surrounded by woods and large meadows and gardens gay with flowers. It was a June night, and the sun had been hot on the pines all day long, and in the meadows, stocked with hay as sweet as honey. We were sitting in the wide veranda, eating ices. My eldest girl had been singing a little, sad Russian song—all our music has sorrow in it—and my wife's hand was in mine.

"We had perhaps twenty people staying with us, but I do not remember what happened to them, although I see bits of them sometimes in my dreams.

"The peasants came through the woods with torches. They took me first. I was a strong man then, and when I felt a peasant's hand on me, I must have given trouble, because to a man of my class a peasant's hand is a contamination. Ah, yes! We were very fond of our peasants, but they were our peasants. When I saw their faces, I knew that they were beyond

reason; they could not even hear what I said. The little red band of strangers was with them. *The little red band!* I shall not tell you all they did, but I perfectly remember.

"I remember every single thing that happened to my wife and to my children. I do not think any detail ever escapes me any night of my life. They tied me to a tree with ropes of iron; otherwise I think I could quite easily have burst them.

"The peasants went into the house, but the red band stayed. I called to the peasants to stay, too, but they were under the madness of plunder.

"It was the red band that took my wife and children, and tortured and burned them before my eyes. My wife said my name once and then God's. She did not speak again. I think she was a saint and went to God quickly. But the children screamed.

"They would not kill me, because I went crazy, and they had a superstition against killing those who wanted death. They took me away somewhere where I could not kill myself. For six weeks I was mad. I do not remember quite what it was like. Nothing in my brain lasted, and all my thoughts were as broken as life is broken in a dream.

"Then, one day, I woke up in a hospital. I was weak, but I knew everything that had happened, and what was in my brain stayed there. At first I was unhappy. You know that in any great physical pain you cannot feel as if anything of yourself escapes? Not an idea? Not the scent of a rose? All the world is caught in a net of the same pain? Well, that was what I felt like, only the pain was not physical. My soul was drenched in sorrow.

"Then the idea came to me, and gradually the pain subsided. It was driven out by my idea—not at all quickly, and not at all finally, but some of my life went into the idea as well as into the pain.

"I decided I would not kill myself, that I would even avoid death, until I had accomplished my idea. I had plenty of time to think out my purpose. I was in that hospital for six months, and I had typhoid. All of us in the hospital had typhoid, and most of us died.

"I changed my name and my clothes with the dead man next to me. He was very well thought of by the Bolsheviks, and a Jew. Then I left the hospital—but I did not immediately leave Russia. There were thirty of that red band—and I found twenty of them. Now there are, I regret to say, still ten. But the twenty I killed, one by one, when I could find them. They saw my face first. But, unfortunately, I had to kill them quickly. The rest I could not find.

"Then I went out of Russia on the papers of a dead Jew. When you remember who the young man in the photograph was, it is a little funny. Fortunately, my friend, the Jew, had never been out of Russia, so I lived under his name with fellow Bolsheviks in Hungary. I stopped killing them by my hands. I worked for Bela Kun and handed on my information to the Allies.

"In the end, they traced my work back to me, and I had to fly. I escaped death by thirty seconds, and found a bullet in my pocket. But my name was no longer any use to me.

"I shaved my beard and went to Paris. By an interesting process, which you will excuse me from repeating, as it involves others, I became Adolphe Fleuret, a professor of archæology at the Sorbonne. It had been my hobby in my youth.

"There was a good deal going on in Paris, which the police did not know, and which it was well for them to learn. So they learned it, but the police themselves did not know who was their teacher. They arrested me once as a Bolshevik, and I had some difficulty in

getting off, but, by being suspect to the police and on their lists, I was able to learn more. Still, I had to be careful, for all my friends were my enemies.

"The Chat Noir suited me very well, and an Englishman of your established position even better. The police stopped shadowing me and my other friends found my financial news, with which you were so kind as to furnish me occasionally, very useful.

"For a time, I made the best use of both worlds, and during the day I taught archaeology, which is the study of ruins. Then an awkward thing happened. I was by way of giving information, not to the police, but to a certain high authority. We will not say who, but he had an office of the most vital integrity. It was a very important, very serious, very—what you English call in fun: 'Hush! Hush!' Only there was not any fun, and, one day, I sent them in a report of a private meeting only known to two other Bolshevik leaders and myself. There were twelve others working under us, but in the main they knew nothing but their orders. And one of them, in this office under the government, read the report of the meeting. They all read it, of course, in the office, but he, as you see, happened to be a genuine leader of the Bolsheviks. It was a little awkward, was it not, for me? Particularly, as I had no idea that he had read it.

"I went the next night, as usual, to the Bolshevik meeting place. It was in one of those quiet Paris streets, off a thoroughfare, where the little close-shuttered houses have high walls and private gardens. I let myself in quietly and went upstairs to our committee room. That, too, was quiet, but it was not altogether what I had expected.

"They had called in the other twelve who worked under us, and all fourteen stood behind the table in a row, looking at me. Our leader moved forward and said: 'Your report on our meeting has

been read by one of us, at the Rue Cyclops. This is your trial, and will be your execution. Have you anything to say for yourself first?"

"'Yes,' I said, 'I have something. Will you tell me what our comrade was doing at the Rue Cyclops if it was not precisely the same as I am doing here? And will you have the goodness to inform me if the wicked bourgeoisie had killed his wife and children before his eyes, to act as a little incentive?"

"This surprised them, and they began to argue with each other, and, incidentally, I discovered which of them had been working in the Rue Cyclops. He was new to me, but I took in his name and his features. That decided me to get away. I could not let such a secret die in a Paris sewer.

"Then they faced me again and said: 'It does not matter at all why you have betrayed us. It is sufficient that you do not leave this house alive.' And one of them who was annoyed at my irony, perhaps—for *canaille* dislike irony—threw an inkpot at my head.

"It missed me by the fraction of a hair, but the ink covered me, and I do not like ink, so I, too, turned angry and put my hand to my breast to reach a heavy cigarette case to retaliate with, and they cried out with one accord: '*Garde à vous!* He has a revolver!' And I kept my hand there, facing them. It was at the hour when we usually dined together at the Chat Noir.

"'Gentlemen,' I said, 'the first who moves will not move again!' And I slid back till I felt the door handle behind me. I was quick, then, for I had to be quick. I heard them at my heels. I took the garden in a flying leap, and at the corner I dived straight into a big courtyard to the left of me.

"I assure you it was the hand of God that put it there, not my wisdom. I saw a light burning in an upper room and I ran to it. There was a young man sitting and writing at a desk. He

had on the uniform of the United States. I said: 'Behind me are several Bolsheviks, who will kill me! That does not matter—but promise me to go to-morrow to one hundred and eighty-five Rue Cyclops and to say that forty-six told you seventy-six is Prosper Arnot. You need say no more than that. I go.'

"The young man replied: 'Not on your life—you *don't* go! I am the American Intelligence! Get behind that safe!'

"So I got behind the safe just as the door burst open.

"It was Prosper Arnot who entered. He was out of breath with running. I could only see his neat, light feet, but they could not keep still. 'Pardon!' he said. 'Something very serious has taken place. An arrested anarchist has escaped and taken shelter in this building. He is of the utmost danger to the state. We saw him enter this courtyard and he has not come out.'

"'Why!' said the American. 'Isn't that too bad? But there are two ways out. I guess he must have taken the other one!'

"'No! No!' said Prosper. 'My men are there, you understand—at both doors! Monsieur will have the kindness to let me search the building at once!'

"'Show me your warrant, then, and search away,' said the young officer. 'But I won't have any of your men in this room. You can see for yourself he's not here, and I am the American Intelligence—none of our things in this room may be touched. I am responsible to the United States for them.'

"Prosper Arnot hesitated. You see, as long as I was in danger, he was safe, but if I was safe, he was in danger, and he was a little pressed to find out which. I should have liked to see their eyes meet and read each other's; but I do not think Arnot read much in those young eyes of the American. He

showed him at length a disk that we all of us carry who work at the Rue Cyclops. It is as good as a police warrant.

"'If he is in hiding and comes in here, by any chance,' Arnot urged, 'I warn monsieur that he is as dangerous as a snake, and carries weapons. It would be safer to leave two of my men here to watch for him.'

"'I guess you'd be wasting your men,' said the American dryly. 'I'm a handy man with firearms, myself. I have two right here, and I'm not at all gun-shy!'

"Prosper breathed a little quickly. Then he went out. We heard him run softly as a cat up the stairs of the house to the roof, and, when he came down, he looked in again—but nothing had changed. He swore under his breath and went out.

"He had the other thirteen well posted, I expect, and by now they all had weapons. It was one of those singular chances which happen to unlucky men that they had not had them on when I arrived. I think I came ten minutes sooner than they had expected.

"'Lucky men do not have such chances, for, you see, they have something to lose. Life is like a clever pick-pocket—it robs only those who have their pockets full.'

"After a long silence the young man rose up, shut, and locked his door. I got out from behind the safe, and we looked at each other.

"'If you are what you say,' he said, 'you'd better start right away and give me some proof, and if you're not—don't make any mistake about it—you've seen your finish! I like my Bolsheviks dead!'

"'Ring up Rue Cyclops six-seven-eight-one,' I said. 'And if my story doesn't satisfy you, ask my chief for further particulars. But hurry, for the sooner they know what I have to tell them, the better.'

"I needn't have told him to hurry. He had rung up before I'd finished speaking. He moved like a wolf, and he gave me the receiver and covered me with his revolver while I spoke.

"The chief was there himself. After my experience with Prosper Arnot, he was the only man I would have dared to trust. He had two dead sons. It seemed he already had suspicions of Arnot. I could hear his voice along the wire, quick, in little breaths, like that engaging dog of yours in England, the terrier, at a rat hole. At the end he said: 'Yes—that is valuable. Are you safe?'

"'Not particularly,' I said, and, with fourteen men waiting for me outside a building where they knew I must be, I do not think I was exaggerating.

"'Ah,' he said, 'that is a pity, for I cannot do anything to help you. I am anxious not to bring the police into this affair just yet.' Then he rang off. He had no further use for me. You see, I had been found out, and for him it was the same if I left Paris or the world. I thanked the American.

"'Satisfy yourself,' I said, 'and I go. You have served France.'

"'But no—he would not satisfy himself, that American. 'Sure,' he said, 'you're all right. I reckoned you were from the start, though I only take the chances I have to. But, if you leave this room, you're as dead as Moses!'

"'That is true,' I said. 'But I share his privilege—I shall have helped my people forward to the Promised Land.'

"'Well, maybe you can help them some more,' said the young man. 'You seem to have quite a down on Bolsheviks. As we're in for an all-night sitting, you may as well tell me all about it.'

"'He was an engaging young man and I liked him. His face was that of a child of fifteen and his mind was as old as the hills. I did not tell him my private history, but I gave him my career

since leaving Russia, and he found it interesting. At one point he observed: 'By Gosh, Europe is *some* place!' He used these singular expressions. 'Well, it's evident you can't stay in France,' he said when I had finished. 'You'd be about as safe here as a naked child in a wasp's nest. But I'll get you across the pond to Brother Bull. You might screw your way down to the roots of some of his little worries. You'll have to hide up a bit first, though, for it'll be hot work getting you out! I think we'll live in for a week, and then light out on a destroyer. I have some naval friends among the British, and what we work without papers will go through like a breeze!'

"'Ever been on a destroyer? Well, I like them—they move. That was how I reached your country six months ago. They came at dawn, three naval gentlemen, when there was enough light to see corners by, in a motor. Three naval officers in a long, gray car; and we traveled across France as flame licks up sawdust. The one who drove had a face I remember to have seen in the newspapers. I think he ran over death, for he took a chance with every second, and yet nothing touched us. In less than three hours the sea was under us, and I had said good-by to that pleasant young man, whose face was like a child's."

"'You might have come to see me sooner,' I said, "if you've been over here six months."

"'No,' he said, "I was not really here. A young Mr. Thompson, from Mexico, with an American accent, arrived at Dover—he understood coal mining and lived in Yorkshire. He also wrote for very extreme papers. It would have been a pity for young Mr. Thompson to have been seen with the manager of a well-known London bank. But tonight I have finished with young Mr. Thompson. I can afford your society."

"'And what have you found out,' I

asked, "over here? Things are disturbed enough?"

"Disturbed, yes," he agreed. "But I think you will escape revolution. You will go near it, very likely—you are already nearer than you know—but life will alter itself without much bloodshed. Ireland, perhaps—perhaps a little here and there, also, over the rest of the kingdom, but not enough in which to drown this cat. Life will yield here reasonably to pressure, and, perhaps, after all, it *should* yield. The men whom I have worked with in England in the mines and on railways and in their black, small houses, I respect. I would not have them killed—ruined, perhaps, but not killed—and only ruined because I stand by my idea. I have only that to live for, you see. But it shakes a little sometimes. I find myself wondering whether that evil I set out to kill is a new evil about to overwhelm the world, or but the result of an old evil which has already overwhelmed it?"

"Perhaps there would have been no red bands if life had been with us less easy, less opulent, less cruel? Perhaps what I set out to hate and kill was what I myself had made. This thought has struck me: Was the red band their murderer? Or was it I?"

I told him I thought this was a morbid idea, and he seemed to agree with me that it was morbid. To change the subject, I asked him what he thought of England as a country.

He said he had found it stronger and kinder than he expected.

"Conservative," he said, "supple, unintelligent, successful, not very tragic, and, on the whole, with many horrible inconveniences, the most comfortable country in the world!"

He held out his hand with a little gesture that seemed to close our interview. I found myself getting up and standing before him as if I were his servant.

"Good-by, my friend," he said kindly.

"I think your bank will hold, and perhaps—who knows—I, who care nothing about banks, may have helped it to hold. Those are the things one helps—the things one does not care about."

It was three o'clock in the morning, and I urged him to stay the rest of the night and breakfast with me next morning.

But he said that before a long journey he always felt a little restless, and would like to go out into the snow.

Paul, the cat, had fallen asleep on his knees and he laid him very gently on the sofa of my room, without waking him. I have never before seen Paul acquiesce in any one's choosing him a place, but he never even stirred in his sleep. It was curious to think those gentle hands had killed twenty men. I wanted as I have never wanted before to express something to him of my sympathy with his infinite tragedy; but I belong to a dumb nation, and something, too, in the man himself seemed to prevent it.

I am, on the whole, a republican, and my sympathies have always been liberal, but I think I was conscious of his royalty. It was as if he had decided what he wanted from me, and would not take anything else.

I never saw him again, but, two days later, I read in the paper that an obscure anarchist whose alias was known to the police as Mr. Thompson, but who was suspected of being a Russian Bolshevik, had been discovered lying dead with a bullet through his brain, at the corner of a not-too-savory street in Soho. There was a revolver lying a few feet away, and it was not known whether he had been murdered or whether he had taken his own life.

I myself do not feel quite sure which it was, but I fear that when he was alone, he returned to that morbid idea—the idea that he himself had been the cause of "The Little Red Band."



The Red Rooster

By Lilian Bell



COLONEL BUSHROD CULPEPPER strolled to the door of his office and stood, one hand on the lintel, the other in his trousers pocket.

The day was warm, even for Tullyston, Kentucky, and the colonel's gaze was rendered listless by the heat.

The hotel hack rattled up the street from the car shed, and the colonel's eyes investigated its occupants from habit. Suddenly, as a woman's bold, handsome profile met his gaze, his loose figure galvanized into a rigidity which spelled terror—that terror which only widowers and bachelors and wild animals feel—the terror of the hunted.

The lady in the hack had not seen him. Indeed, she had no chance, for the colonel had melted into space at the sight of her, with an agility not to be expected in one of his length of limb or girth of waist.

Safe in the seclusion of the back office, the colonel crouched over the telephone, his left hand clutching the edge of his desk with despairing vigor.

"Julia Mattie, that you? . . . I ain't whisperin'! I'm talkin' just as loud! Listen, honey! Cousin Claudia just went by! . . . Yes, 'twas her! . . . Huh? On her way to the hotel first, to primp, I reckon! . . . Oh, I know whose house she's comin' to! Mine! She's come for Pussy's weddin' and she'll stay for three months after it's over! That's the way she did at cousin Annie Voorhees, and aunt Jinny Ward's! What say? . . . Who, me? . . .

I won't do any such of a thing! . . . No, I ain't *afraid*, exactly—I wish you'd quit that laughin', Julia Mattie! . . . Huh? . . . I didn't hear that last. You think you can beat her—*beat cousin Claudia*? Well, you're mighty smart, but— . . . If I call on her now, like you tell me tuh, and keep her there an hour, you think— Why, of cou'se I'll let you do all the talkin'—don't I always? Fall right in with everything you say? . . . Well—you sound mighty consolin'—I said you sounded mighty convincin'. All right! Tell her we're a little upset gettin' ready for the weddin', but bring her up to dinner and then see! All right! Good-by!"

Colonel Culpepper stepped into the front office and paused before the oval, black-rimmed mirror, from whose back the quicksilver had peeled until he had to take his reflection by the inductive method.

Nevertheless, as the colonel's costume never varied, being composed of black broadcloth trousers, a linen shirt with pleated bosom, turnback cuffs and rolling collar attached, a flowing black silk tie, and, in summer, a black alpaca coat, which all the knowledge in the world would never prevent his calling "*alpaca*," his toilette before the glass merely consisted of running his beautifully shaped brown hand through his loosely curling black locks, twisting his white goatee into a tight spiral, and straightening his shoulders. Thus it really made little difference whether he looked

into the mirror or at a blank wall. The colonel knew he was handsome. He reveled in his good looks. And the only time he wished they were not quite so patent was when cousin Claudia cast an appraising eye upon them.

Mrs. Claudia Bowie had once been told she looked like Madame Récamier, and ever since, Mrs. Bowie had been a burden to her friends. She herself felt that she was merely taking advantage of the dramatic possibilities of every situation. But, when she arrived at the house of any of her kinsfolk, let down her splendid hair, and took to her bed, from whose fastness, clad in charming negligee, she deliberately made eyes at every man on the place, the disgusted mothers and daughters, who had to wait on her, called her names which would have curdled her blood, had she heard them. Mrs. Bowie was utterly without means of support, save her wits; nevertheless the women themselves suggested the giving of checks which made each hegira a certainty. It was well known that cousin Claudia never stayed anywhere after check day.

Certain determined matrons sometimes set their teeth and vowed *not* to give in this time and actually pay her to move on. But, carrying three meals a day to the room of a guest soon wears out the strongest will, and—the men found Claudia's wit and good looks and Madame Récamier airs very diverting. Too much so, in fact, for wives who knew their business to allow her to remain indefinitely.

The colonel had been a widower for fifteen years. And these fifteen years had been filled with the delightful possibility of finding some beautiful woman—widow or girl—it made no difference to the colonel—who would appreciate him at his true value. The colonel proposed to be the judge of that value. The only cloud in the unshadowed blue of the colonel's horizon was the fact that cousin Claudia, albeit flirtatious with

other men, had set her eye firmly on her handsome third cousin as a second husband. The colonel recognized this with a crawling of the marrow in his bones. For, if there was one woman his soul loathed, it was the widow Bowie.

The colonel, pompous and royal himself, preferred the petite, spirituelle type of woman. Such as the Tullys, for example.

For several years, he had flirted with his widowed second cousin, Mrs. Julia Mattie Tully, whom he wheedled into allowing him to invest her husband's life insurance in a perfectly sure thing. On her daughter's advice, she finally let him have it.

The flirtation was divorced of its piquancy when the sure thing failed and the Tullys lost nearly everything.

But Julia Mattie had the sweetest disposition in the world—with the possible exception of her lovely daughter, Sallie Lou, who had one just like it—so cousin Bushrod Culpepper was still in her good books, and when in trouble, Julia Mattie was always the first to whom he turned.

And the advent of cousin Claudia spelled trouble to the whole Tullyston connection. Nobody liked her. Everybody was afraid of her. Some of her kinfolk frankly said she was crazy, but only behind her back, for cousin Claudia had the temper of his satanic majesty and the tongue of Xantippe.

But, knowing these things, Julia Mattie said nothing. When she could not speak well of a person, it was her habit to preserve a discreet silence—a trait of character which won her endless homage from the men who observed it and whose womenfolk handled matters differently. But, on the subject of cousin Claudia, Julia Mattie's busy brain did some expert thinking. Of course, it may have been that, in spite of the life-insurance fiasco, Julia Mattie still felt that cousin Bushrod was her property, and it may have stirred her fighting blood to see the majestic, black-eyed,

raven-haired Claudia lay siege to him. Sallie Lou said that not for nothing were the Tullys red-headed.

Now, the State of Kentucky has committed many iniquitous crimes against the peace of mankind in the beautiful women she has mothered and spread broadcast to devastate the land, but never, since the days of Sallie Ward, has she produced greater beauties than the two Tullys—Julia Mattie and her daughter Sallie Lou—a scant seventeen years between their ages.

Even other women lost their heads over Julia Mattie and Sallie Lou, and raved about their beauty persistently. Yet, withal, the Tullys were so pathetically, proudly poor that they could never go anywhere to have their beauty seen, and Tullyston boasted two thousand inhabitants, including the blacks.

Julia Mattie was beginning to wake up. The marriage of Pussy Culpepper to a young banker from St. Louis brought home very clearly to her mother mind that not an eligible loomed on the horizon of Sallie Lou, and, as she tore the beds to pieces in cousin Bushrod's house, making the old colored servants carry mattresses out into the back yard at a pace they vainly tried to moderate on account of a "mis'ry in de back," her brain was as busy as her hands and feet.

Inside of the hour which cousin Bushrod had agreed to spend with Claudia, Julia Mattie had dismantled the whole house and, instead of a delicious hot, fried-chicken dinner that cousin Claudia had anticipated from past experience, Julia Mattie, much to the mortification of old Chloe, spread bits of cold leftovers and used the kitchen china.

Nevertheless, she was cordiality itself as she went forth to greet the approaching goddess.

Claudia was nearly six feet tall, and handsome. Her great black eyes and splendid, rich coloring were nothing short of regal. And she carried herself like a drum major.

"Howdy, cousin Claudia!" said Julia Mattie, fluttering out of the empty parlor.

"Why, what's the matter with the house?" asked the startled guest, meeting a wardrobe on its way downstairs.

"Oh, we are all torn up, getting ready for Pussy's wedding. This is nothing to what we shall look like to-morrow! But come in, do!"

"Why, what in the world——" began cousin Claudia. Then, turning, "You never told me of this, cousin Bushrod!"

Her voice was drowned by pounding from upstairs—pounding on iron, evidently.

"I wonder where we can go to talk!" cried Julia Mattie during a pause in the din.

The colonel turned away. After his first involuntary start of surprise, he recognized the certainties which Julia Mattie's plan played with: No one in the world demanded more luxury, more creature comforts than Mrs. Bowie. She was miserable in environments other women endured contentedly.

"I see you've brought your suit case," said Julia Mattie hospitably. "I've arranged for Bushrod to sleep next door at the Cokers', but I'll have a mattress spread on the parlor floor for you and we'll make you just as comfortable as we can. You'll have to get up kind o' early, though, because the painters begin here in the morning."

Mrs. Bowie's eyes flashed.

"Why, Pussy isn't to be married for a month, cousin Bushrod," she said, dropping into a hard-bottomed kitchen chair, after vainly seeking for a rocker. "Now that I've come, hoping for a nice, quiet visit with the dear child, couldn't you put off the workmen for a while? You know my poor head can't stand noises!"

"Why, Pussy is visiting in Louisville, cousin Claudia," said Colonel Culpepper. "And all these arrangements are in cousin Julia Mattie's hands. I am

under her authority till I don't dah say my soul is my own!"

A flash of Claudia's black eyes in Julia Mattie's direction, intended to annihilate, followed the tactless speech.

"Dinner's ready!" announced Julia Mattie, nodding brightly at the scowling countenance of old Chloe, whose pride was outraged by the "po'-white-trash way Miss Julia Mattie was treatin' the comp'ny old Marse done brung home." And, gayly the Titania of the party annexed the Roman empress and led her forth to a fare which made the colonel's hair stiffen on his head.

"You all will have to excuse this pick-up lunch," said Julia Mattie. "But I haven't the heart to make Chloe cook, after running her off her feet with the cleaning. Pussy wants the old house to look its best for her wedding, and I'm determined to humor her."

Julia Mattie's intrenchment was unassailable. The ponderous enemy admitted this, with a rumble of rage which she tardily turned into a cough.

Mrs. Bowie refused to eat. She folded her hands in her lap and rolled her black eyes from one to the other of her hosts, until the colonel grew so nervous that he choked on his cold tea.

He looked pleadingly at Julia Mattie, but received in turn a glare from her tawny eyes which made his own blink with surprise.

When the uncomfortable meal was over, she found an opportunity to whisper to him.

"She's so mad, she wants to go right now, but she's ashamed to let us see through her, poor dear! She'll stick it out one night, but she'll go to-morrow. Keep it up!"

But the courage of the soft-hearted colonel needed more reinforcement than Julia Mattie's swift whisper. In spite of his fear, his dread, even, he was rendered so uncomfortable by Julia Mattie's drastic measures, that he felt he

must make up for her hardness of heart by a little extra courtesy to his guest.

Julia Mattie, reading him like a book, felt a swift contempt for his lack of courage. He had abjectly begged her to extricate him from his dilemma and promised explicit obedience. Nevertheless, here he was, carrying the most comfortable rocking-chair out under the trees and attitudinizing for cousin Claudia's admiration.

As Julia Mattie recognized his irresistible vanity, she smiled gleefully.

"In ten minutes, he'll run in and want to hide behind my skirts!" she said to herself.

Secure in this knowledge, she slipped on a tiny white sunbonnet, took a pan of wet corn meal from a table on the back porch, and went out to feed the colonel's prize chickens.

The big red rooster who had taken the blue ribbon at half a dozen poultry shows, being the largest and most beautifully brilliant cock in the county, was waiting for her at the door of the chicken yard. His bright eyes shone with almost human intelligence, and Julia Mattie talked to him as she scattered the meal.

She walked along the wired chicken run, laughing to see them scramble—white leghorns, black Spanish, buff cochins, plymouth rocks, Rhode Island reds, Orpingtons. No wonder the colonel prided himself on his poultry! But the big red rooster got some belonging to all, for he ran at large and he followed the pan.

The colonel's agitated figure suddenly appeared on the back porch. He waved his handkerchief at her. There was a smile in the depths of the sunbonnet as Julia Mattie made haste to obey.

The colonel's fine brown face was flushed and he cast uneasy glances over his shoulder as he talked.

"What did you go 'way for?" he demanded. "I tell you, that is the most

determined woman I ever saw! And—and the most shameless!"

"Well, why did you go and make her comfortable, when I've worked myself to the bone to make her uncomfortable?" demanded Julia Mattie. "Do you want her to stay? If so, I'll go home and tend to my own house!"

"Lord, no! Julia Mattie! Don't you dah leave me alone with her!" cried the colonel, with bulging eyes.

"If you make her comfortable one more time, even, I hope she will propose to you!" declared Julia Mattie. "You deserve it, and I'd make you say yes!"

The colonel's knees wobbled with fright.

"I'm going!" he said, setting his straw hat on the back of his head and marching down the front walk, deaf to cousin Claudia's calls.

He was late to supper and Claudia had a headache from the pounding. She had slipped upstairs, when she thought Julia Mattie was not looking, and found a little black boy with a hammer busily engaged in pounding all old tacks into the floors. Claudia tried to bribe him with ten cents to pull them out instead of driving them in. But her purse was unable to cope with Julia Mattie's cunning offer of five cents a dozen for all he could find to pound in. Indeed, Julia Mattie carelessly left a paper full of tacks on a window sill and the next morning paper and all had disappeared, so she rather imagined the job had been well done. Then, too—Claudia's headache.

Julia Mattie intended to go home for supper, but the colonel's urging was so insistent that she stayed and ate another cold meal.

At about nine o'clock, she saw that the arrangements for Claudia's comfort were what they should be for the night. The mattresses were piled on the bare floor of the parlor. A washbowl and pitcher were on a kitchen chair. Julia

Mattie thought there could be no harm in a rocking-chair, so Moses brought one.

The colonel, hovering in her vicinity, was hoping for a quiet talk with her when he took her home. He wanted his rôle outlined more definitely. Also, he wanted sympathy. Furthermore, all the afternoon he had been wanting Julia Mattie herself. Seeing the two women together had shown him clearly where his preference lay. Then, too, it was getting to be altogether too much of a good thing to be stalked in this way, as if he were a deer and Claudia the hunter! The colonel had a fine sense of humor, so he smiled over the aptness of his simile.

But, when he went to offer his services as escort for Julia Mattie, his indignation rose by leaps and bounds when Mrs. Claudia decided to go, too. The moon was just rising, the air was soft, the street shadowed by great trees, and all the scents of a dozen gardens were floating out on the dewy night. And, after leaving Julia Mattie at her house, there were two long, quiet squares to walk back—the colonel and Claudia alone together! Mrs. Bowie had pictured it all in her mind's eye.

As the unhappy man took off his hat to say good-by to Julia Mattie at her steps, she observed that he wiped his brow with a hand that trembled.

She laughed, yet she frowned what Sallie Lou called "her infinitesimal frown" as she saw them walk away together. Claudia was a widow and the colonel was only a man!

Nevertheless, like a good general, Julia Mattie at once projected herself into the enemy's probable tactics for the next day, with the result that Sallie Lou was called at daybreak to help her mother wash and dry her wonderful hair, which rippled to within six inches of her tiny feet—number one-and-a-half shoes she wore, by the way. On two juleps the colonel was wont to de-

clare that he could hold both of her feet on the palm of his hand.

With her hair still damp, Julia Mattie braided it in a thick braid and left it hanging down her brown gingham back. She borrowed Sallie Lou's one pair of brown silk stockings and her high-heeled tan oxfords, and thus equipped, she tripped down the shady street, looking in her short skirt and yellow sunbonnet, about twenty years old.

She observed as she opened the gate, that Madame Récamier had arrived. The wicker lounge had been placed out under the trees, and Mrs. Bowie, in a dark-blue silk negligee, was reclining thereon, with her blue-black hair spread like a veil all around her. But Julia Mattie Tully, her damp braid flopping along her back, was undismayed by the straight abundance of the widow Bowie's display. Was not her own getting ready to—but there!

The colonel did not come home to dinner. Indeed, he telephoned Mrs. Tully the moment he got to the office, indignantly declaring that he *never* would go back until that woman left. But Julia Mattie ordered him to come home about three and she promised to have Claudia safely on the eight o'clock train, bound for Lexington, if he would deputize Julia Mattie to offer Claudia a check.

Having received carte blanche, Julia Mattie advanced upon the foe, her eyes rather bright at the thought of the onslaught her rival had made on their unhappy victim of the night before. The colonel had not gone into details—oh, no! But Julia Mattie knew.

Mrs. Tully was received with such chilling composure that she made haste to occupy herself in the house. She was met by old Chloe, whose nervous manner attracted Julia Mattie's attention. Finally, the old woman blurted it out.

"I knows you'll be mad, Miss Julia Mattie, but Miss Claudia done made me

kill some chickens las' night. She say she ain't well, en dish yere col' vittles we'se givin' huh done make her new-raligy wuss."

"That's all right, Chloe," said Mrs. Tully smoothly. "How many did you kill?"

"She tole me to kill fo' young pullets an' fry 'em *all*!" said Chloe. "En I done 'beyed huh. She's comp'ny!"

"You did just right, of course," said Julia Mattie. "I had planned to have that cold corned beef, but fried chicken will be nicer! Now you go get your pan and start in cleaning the windows in Miss Pussy's room."

And with a light step, Mrs. Tully walked out toward the kennels, leaving the old woman drawing long breaths of relief. She had plainly expected a sharp reproof.

A dull, grinding noise a little later drew Julia Mattie to the side porch. Moses was there, laboriously turning the handle of the ice-cream freezer. The old man's white, woolly head actually ducked when he saw her.

"What are you doing, Moses?" she asked pleasantly.

"Makin' strawb'ry ice cream! Ol' miss, she done come out *early* en gib huh ohdahs! Say she never can forget how *smoove* I freezes ice cream!"

"Let's look at it!" said Julia Mattie. "Wait till I get a spoon!"

Claudia watched them open the freezer.

"I hope you don't mind my asking for ice cream!" she called.

"What did she say, Moses? Go ask her what she said!"

The old man slowly obeyed, ambling across the grass as if time were made for slaves.

"She say," he said on his leisurely return, "she say she hope you don't mind huh axin'!"

"Certainly not. Let off some of this water, Mose, and be sure not to get any

salt into this cream. You spoiled the last you made!"

"I knows I did, Miss Julia Mattie," responded the old man humbly, "but I won't dis time!"

When twelve o'clock came, old Chloe deserted her window cleaning with alacrity and came down to cook a dinner which should redeem the family honor.

The two ladies were amiably chatting, out under the trees.

Suddenly, a black whirlwind appeared, making toward them and threatening devastation. It was Chloe.

"Miss Claudia!" she panted. "De dawgs done et up eve'y one of dem chickens! Yas'm! Now, don't say nothin', case I feels jez ez bade ez y'all does! I put a flat i'on awn de pan, but dey done knocked it off. I sho' thought I had 'em chained in de kennels!"

Claudia's magnificent eyes blazed.

"You fool!" she cried. "You stupid black fool! If I were your mistress, I would make you remember this to the day of your death! To think of losing four splendid frying chickens! Just wait till the colonel comes! I'll tell him what you've done!"

The old woman drew herself up with the dignity of an injured queen. Her feelings were deeply wounded.

"Never mind, Chloe!" said Mrs. Tully kindly. "Go get the dinner I planned. It won't make so *very* much difference, for the colonel is not coming home. He had to drive out in the country and telephoned in that he would be here about three. So go on, now, and make the best of it!"

"Not coming home!" cried Claudia, sitting up suddenly, and turning Madame Récamier out, in favor of Xantippe. "I believe that is *your* doing, Julia Mattie! Why didn't you make him take *me*, if he had to go driving?"

"Why, I never thought of it!" declared Mrs. Tully honestly. "Truly, I didn't! That was stupid of me!"

Claudia eyed her.

"I believe you're jealous of me!" she said at last, with open hostility.

"I don't think I am, cousin Claudia!" demurred Julia Mattie.

Claudia leaned back.

"Well, anyway, we've got the ice cream!" she said irrelevantly.

When the colonel came haltingly up the brick walk at half past three, he found Madame Récamier there alone. Julia Mattie was nowhere to be seen.

"Bushrod Culpepper!" said his guest, without preamble. "I want to talk to you. Sit down here. Now, I am your friend! I take a most tender interest in your welfare. There is no one, Bushrod, who thinks more of you than I do. And I want to warn you that Julia Mattie is in love with you!"

The colonel, who had begun to look wildly over his shoulder for his first aid, came back with a jump.

"What makes you think so, cousin Claudia?"

"Oh, I don't wonder you look excited! It's enough to exasperate a saint, the open way she ogles you! And the way she tries to get rid of me! I had come, hoping that in your hospitable home and warm heart, I could find a welcome for a long, long visit. My lonely life, Bushrod——"

As she took this time to cover her eyes with her handkerchief, she did not see the colonel grip his chair with both hands, as if about to bolt.

"Tell me, dear Bushrod!" she said tenderly. "Did you make me that disconcerting offer about the—the check?"

"Wh—what disconcerting offer!"

"Julia Mattie said you offered to double the amount of money I had in my purse!"

"Yes!" said the colonel manfully, keeping a tight grip on his promise to Julia Mattie.

"She said it—the little viper!—just after I told her I was penniless—that I hadn't fifty cents in the world!"

"Yes?" said the colonel, beginning to see daylight.

"She said: 'Oh, I am sorry, for Bushrod told me to tell you he would double whatever you had!' You see, she just wanted to see if I had been telling the truth! Oh-h she is *sly*!"

"What makes you think so?" questioned the man, as much to stop the flow of perspiration as for information.

"Because, when I went in and tore my poor old purse to pieces, I found in an inside place, a twenty-dollar bill I'd lost and never knew was there!"

The colonel paused in the act of wiping the back of his neck.

"I see!" he said quietly. "Well, then, cousin Claudia, shall I make out your check for double twenty dollars and fifty cents?"

"No, I found about two dollars more in chicken feed in my card case!" said Mrs. Bowie, her black eyes growing hard with money hunger.

"I see!" said the colonel again.

"I'm going on the eight o'clock train this evening!" she went on. "I've never been so treated. I took the liberty of ordering fried chicken and ice cream for dinner. I wanted to surprise you. But your stupid fool of a cook let the dogs eat up the chicken and Moses let salt into the ice cream! I wouldn't stay here and eat what Julia Mattie puts before me for one more day to save her life! She's done it just to get rid of me. She's jealous of my influence over you, Bushrod! Here she comes! Not a word of this to her! I just thought I would put you on your guard! You don't quite hate me for it—do you?"

She flung a melting glance at him, which the approaching Julia Mattie caught.

"Doesn't Claudia look stunning with her hair all down!" she cried. "My! How long it is!"

The colonel sprang to offer Julia Mattie a chair.

"She looks like a queen!" he declared gallantly, but his eyes were for the Titania, whose cleverness had rescued him from three months of the queen.

"Oh, my hair isn't so wonderful!" said Claudia coquettishly. "Let yours down, Julia Mattie, and let's compare them! Cousin Bushrod shall be the judge!"

The younger woman demurred, but the colonel joined his entreaties to Claudia's, which finally persuaded her.

The colonel had never seen Julia Mattie's hair braided down her back since she was a girl, and his suspicions, aroused by Claudia, were on the qui vive. When, therefore, he saw that Julia Mattie, with apparent carelessness, pushed her chair into the sunlight, so that the glory of her rippling, golden shower should catch its beams, he slapped his thigh in suddenly illuminated delight.

Those two beautiful women were both in love with him! And Julia Mattie had offered to rid him of Claudia so that she might win him for herself!

He turned away to hide an elation which he feared to have detected.

As he strolled up and down, his hands behind his back, his attention was arrested by the sight of the red rooster. He stood, his haughty crest on high, his bright eyes sparkling with vanity, watching a black hen and a buff cochin challenge each other with open beaks and ruffled plumage. These females were fighting for *him*!

The colonel cast a sly glance behind him at the two widows, pitting *their* charms against each other with him for the prize, and his appreciation of the analogy nearly choked him.

As he walked home with Julia Mattie, after the two of them had seen cousin Claudia safely on the eight o'clock train, the colonel laughed aloud.

"What are you laughing at, cousin

Bushrod?" asked Julia Mattie, passing through the gate he held open.

"At my thoughts, honey!" he said, closing his hand over hers. "I was just wonderin' how somethin' I saw this afternoon came out! That's all! Are you tired, sweetheart?"

The colonel was going to propose, and Julia Mattie saw it coming. Not for nothing was this woman a Kentuckian, and a widow. She paused and drew away from him.

The colonel, his handsome face flushed with honest feeling, advanced, holding out both fine, brown dands appealingly.

Julia Mattie tapped one outstretched hand with her fan, glanced with uncontrollable coquetry from under her long eyelashes, then skipped up the steps and into the house, letting the screen door slam on its rubber ball.

The colonel halted, puzzled.

Was it possible that she—

"Julia Mattie!" he called. "I've got somethin' impohtant to tell you!"

"I know you have, Bushrod!"

"Will you come back hyah and listen?"

"No, Bushrod!"

"You *won't*, Julia Mattie?"

"No, Bushrod—*dear friend!*"

The colonel's jaw dropped.

He wanted—*he*, Bushrod Culpepper!—wanted to propose to a woman, and the woman wouldn't even—

And after fifteen years of delicious deliberation!

To think—

The colonel's very thoughts were dis-jointed with surprise. He stared at the faintly vibrating screen door. *She* was within the dim coolness—delicious, alluring, desirable, but—

Something like a faint laugh came to his ears. Julia Mattie also had an amusing recollection of the afternoon.

Without a word, the colonel turned and went slowly down the flagged walk

to the gate. He was not angered by Julia Mattie's laugh—he was dazed.

That any woman should feel *moved* to laugh at *him*, Bushrod Culpepper, whom everybody considered cock of the walk in Tullyston!

Sheer amazement blinded the colonel to the unevenness of the brick sidewalk which lay between the Tully house and his own—a walk which he knew as well as he knew his own majestic name! Now he scuffed over the depressions and stumbled over the elevations where the tree roots had lifted the bricks in uneven waves.

Amazement was succeeded by self-pity in the colonel's mind. Those two women had made a fool of him, and heartless Julia Mattie had laughed. His *own* wife would never have thought of laughing at the humiliation of her lord. The colonel's handsome chin quivered, and for a moment his bruised self-love reached out across the bridge of years to the dead wife whose flattery always soothed.

He opened his own gate, in a mist of tears.

As he stared up the walk the red rooster, drunk with conquest, strutted around the corner of the house, and when his bright eyes rested on the colonel, the triumph of the exultant male found expression in a raucous crow, which jangled across the colonel's raw nerves like a knife across a wire.

Black rage filled the man's mind, at the recollection of his amusement that afternoon.

Stooping, he flung a rock at the big red bird, which caused him to fly, squawking with terror, to his harem for consolation. The colonel could hear the commotion in the chicken yard, as he strode through the wide hall, shouting for Chloe.

The old woman stuck her head out of the dining room, her eyes rolling.

"Chloe, I want you to kill that damned rooster!" cried the colonel.

"Yass, suh! Which roostah y'all mean?"

"The red rooster!"

"Not the *rade* roostah, Marse Cunnel!"

"I said the red one!" shouted the colonel. "Did you hyah me?"

"Yaas, Marse Cunnel! Yaas, I hyah's you!" said Chloe obediently. "You said the *rade* one! Yaas, suh!"

A week passed—a week of cool, stark unhappiness for all concerned. The colonel was so occupied with his own emotions that he failed to observe that no savory fricassee or chicken pie appeared upon his table, signifying that the red rooster was no more.

The fact of the matter was that the rooster had disappeared. Never having had a rock thrown at him before, he failed to understand its significance, save that it indicated that safety lay in flight. Or, it may have been that his harem suggested it. Women have curious intuitions where their loved ones are concerned.

Chloe, however, well knowing that the colonel brooked no excuses for failure to obey, had reasons of her own for declining a controversy with "Marse Cunnel," and, to deflect his mind, she cooked such amazing dishes that, even under ordinary circumstances, a man might have forgotten to ask why chicken failed to appear.

Well she knew what ailed him, but she gave him credit for more sense than he possessed when she chuckled over the way he stayed at home, and gave Miss Julia Mattie a wide berth.

"He'll git huh—he sho' will, if he keeps dis yere stayin'-away business up!" she muttered, as she gave "de beat biskits one hundred licks, no mo', no less!"

Over at Julia Mattie's, a certain listlessness prevailed. To be sure, she had her dancing and her bridge classes, for she taught both, but she thought the

heat was the reason why she seemed to have lost interest in them.

Sallie Lou, usually too clever by half, was so far from suspecting the truth that she failed to observe the rather obvious signs. Only she, too, felt the dullness.

Like a dutiful daughter, she took a vivid interest in her mother's flirtations, and, while she had not exactly participated in Julia Mattie's triumph over her regal rival, nevertheless, she had been informed of all the details.

But Sallie Lou was judicially merciless in her analysis of her mother's methods.

"Don't be too vain of yourself, Julia Mattie," said this modern daughter, "because it was sheer luck that you met the enemy on neutral ground, so that you were able to use those victoriously drastic methods. Suppose she had come to visit *us*! You couldn't be rude to a guest in your own house. She'd have had you nailed to the mast!"

Julia Mattie's head lifted.

"I *might* have thought of something else, daughter. Did *that* possibility ever occur to you?"

Sallie Lou took the tip of her tongue between her milk-white teeth.

"Yes," she smiled, "it is doing it now! But, I also wish to remind you that cousin Claudia is by no means licked. A woman who lives by her wits, as she does, keeps them well sharpened, and you just bet she is lying awake nights thinking up some way to get even with you. Suppose she should come to visit us? It is our turn!"

"She won't!" said Julia Mattie decisively.

"She might!" retorted Sallie Lou mischievously.

At the end of the second week, Julia Mattie felt that things were going too far. Never before in her life of widowhood had she been without an ever-present, ready-to-wear sweetheart. Therefore, to be so suddenly—and it would

appear—permanently bereft of the choicest of her flock, irked her exceedingly.

At the end of the third week, she was seeking some excuse whereby she could be imperatively and against her will driven to call upon the colonel in his office, when, one evening, she observed him coming in at her front gate. She immediately hardened her heart, and resolved to punish him by being quite cool and stand-offish, for having stayed away from her so long.

She observed with a thrill of satisfied vanity how his shoulders drooped and how his steps dragged. Gone was his jauntness, his air of "hail-the-conquering-hero-comes."

She greeted him with obnoxious cheerfulness and led him out on to the back porch, where the scents from her delightful garden would come creeping in as the twilight deepened and the young moon rose.

The colonel resented her air of youth and gayety. He would have been pleased to find that she, too, had regretted and drooped. But no. Julia Mattie looked happier than he had ever seen her. How could he, a mere man, know that she was happy because she had got him again?

Any woman could have told him!

They clung to commonplaces. Pussy's wedding was safe ground. Every phase of it was absorbing to both. And, most absorbing of all was the fact that Pussy, having completed the purchase of her trousseau in Louisville, was expected home the next day. Her young and handsome bridegroom would follow shortly, and, from that hour on, not only the Culpepper mansion, but the entire town, would be given over to pre-nuptial festivities.

Julia Mattie, rocking gracefully back and forth, was discussing these matters, at the same time giving the colonel the full benefit of the lights on her tawny hair, her long eyelashes, the trusting,

upward glance of her innocent gaze. And, every moment, their reactions were filling the unhappy man to the bursting point.

A winding, grassy pathway led from the garden gate along the rear of other gardens clear to the colonel's own house. Julia Mattie's eye was wandering tentatively to its possibilities as an added urge, when Sallie Lou, swift and silent as a shadow, drifted through the French window and, under the pretense of tucking up a stray lock of her mother's hair, murmured:

"Cousin Claudia is at the corner, on her way to visit us for a month. She told me so! I ran on ahead to see if you were at home!"

"I am not!" thought Julia Mattie promptly. And, even Sallie Lou, used as she was to her mother's skill, looked admiringly at a woman who could, apparently without effort or the suspicion of hurry, convoy a gallant visitor down the garden walk and disappear with him along the flirtatious path, under the fruit trees, before the majestic, slow-moving Claudia, preceded by a diminutive black boy, carrying her suit case, could reach the Tullys' hospitable door.

Julia Mattie let the colonel propose this time. She had come to the place when it would sound pleasant to her, and, in spite of his years of philandering, he meant every word he uttered.

But, Julia Mattie listened with only half an ear. The entire rest of her was occupied with the predicament of Claudia, ensconced in her house for a month. She recognized the diabolical cleverness of her rival. She, Julia Mattie, was almost defeated, for she had no move-compelling check to give the queen, and, in that case, it was her custom to stay months! Unless—

The colonel, trembling in every limb, stopped short. Naturally, Julia Mattie stopped, too. He stepped around in front of her and tilted up her dainty chin with a slender, brown forefinger.

"Will you, Julia Mattie?"

Julia Mattie had not rightly heard all that the colonel had been saying, but she had kept a general idea of it. For example, she would instantly have registered if he had stopped or begun taking any of it back. Either of those two contingencies would have halted her with a thump. But, there was no mistaking the question he was putting now.

In a triumphant instant, her mind was made up.

"Yes, Bushrod!" she whispered.

This meek and unexpected volte-face was so surprising that the colonel nearly fell over backward. But, instead, he behaved as any gentleman should, under the circumstances.

When they reached the colonel's, Julia Mattie saw some rustic benches out under the trees.

"Let's sit out here," she said. And, sure enough, what she expected happened. Cousin Claudia and Sallie Lou came strolling down the brick sidewalk and turned in at the front gate.

Sallie Lou realized how her mother had solved the problem as soon as she saw Julia Mattie's hand in the colonel's. And, Claudia, with a snort of rage, saw it, too. So, before any one could speak one word, before the colonel's eager lips could frame his alibi, or before Sallie Lou could even force a smile, cousin Claudia spoke.

"I came to ask Bushrod if he would see me on the eleven o'clock train to Paducah. I'm going to visit aunt Angie, and I only stopped off to say howdy."

At that auspicious moment, the red rooster mysteriously reappeared around the corner of the house, just back of Claudia, and uttered a crow so sudden and so raucously triumphant, that the goddess jumped.

"I wish you'd *kill* that rooster, Bushrod!" she snapped.

"I wouldn't kill him for a thousand dollars!" answered the colonel ungalantly.

Then he turned to Julia Mattie and took her hand again, before them all.



MENAGERIE

ONE is a beaver with a wrinkled nose,
One is a weasel—and I do declare,

I see a melancholy small ant bear,
Curled furriness that snuffles at its toes!
The wombat is both sleepy and morose.

The Bengal tiger cub has such a stare
Of topaz! Two white lemmings sit at prayer
With proper paws, superior to foes.

The taxidermist, with scissors at his waist,
Enters my heart and says, before them all,
(But then, he always waves a silver charm!)
"They should be stuffed!" I eye him with distaste.
My sins are so bright-eyed and warm and small,
The little animals that mean no harm!

WILLIAM ROSE BENET.



His Wife

By Pauline Brooks

Author of "The Intruder," etc.

IN the large country house of the Griswolds—but as the Griswolds do not concern this story their name is of no consequence—society had met for a charity theatrical performance and a dance. At the end of a long L there was a delightful, but unfrequented library. It was a room which invited confidences and promised secrecy, a livable and unlivd-in room which held out welcoming arms to the warmth of human contacts. From afar came the sound of dance music, and now and again a gust of the February wind struck against a window in noisy accompaniment to the distant orchestra.

Into this room sauntered a man and a woman. She was small and dark, with vivid coloring and expression, and quick, darting movements. With a little cry of pleasure she seized a cigarette from a table and turned to her companion so that he might light it for her.

He was tall, with brown hair and very dark eyes which conveyed more to women than he wanted them to. He was extremely good looking in a clean, boyish way. This made him appear younger than his actual age, which was thirty. His face expressed a certain reckless abandon to life, rather than a weak inability to make it serve his purposes. He laughed as he lighted his own cigarette.

"I suppose you brought me here just for this, eh, Nancy?"

"How subtle of you, Tom!" She smiled, gayly derisive. "No, I brought

you here because I want to talk to you about something."

"My word!" he said quizzically. "You sound ominous. What's up?"

"Oh, nothing to shy at, Tommy, dear," she said lightly, throwing herself into a large chair by the fire. Then she added more seriously: "I really don't know whether I'm actuated by rank curiosity or just friendship, but I'd like to ask you something."

"Go ahead." He sat in the chair opposite to her. "I can always be politely evasive as a last resort."

"Tom," she said slowly, "I've known you quite a long time."

He smiled at her seriousness.

"Ever since my sophomore days, when you visited sis at Newport. I remember you were both disgusted with me because I preferred married women to you girls."

"I'm one of the species you hankered after, myself, now," she said whimsically, "and I can understand *their* side of it."

"You're being educated."

She curled her lip at his light irony. "Your education began quite young. That summer you refer to, when your wings got singed—remember?"

He laughed good-naturedly.

"Yes, I remember. Also a good many other singeing processes. But my wings are all burned off now, so I can walk about without fear of that particular, feline mutilation."

"Feline!" Nancy de Koven was in-

dignant. "What horrid words you use, Tom! And, of course, you're just insinuating nasty things about married women who flirt with bachelors. How about the bachelors who go about making unsolicited love to married women and singing *their* wings?"

He smiled mockingly.

"Unsolicited! Nancy, you're delicious! Well, I suppose such things do happen, but I assure you I can plead 'not guilty.'"

"How about Isabelle?" The question came out in sharp staccato.

Tom Carewe rose abruptly and stood looking down at Nancy.

"I wouldn't harm a hair of Isabelle's head, and you know it." He took a few nervous steps away from her.

"Sit down, Tom," she said impatiently. "You make me nervous."

He sat down rather unwillingly and lighted another cigarette.

"You old pig, give me one!" she said teasingly.

He lighted a cigarette for her. Then she took up his last remark.

"I don't know anything of the sort; that's why I wanted to talk to you. Bella is my dearest friend. I don't care a rap about John. It isn't he I'm considering. It's Isabelle—only Isabelle." She bent forward and looked intently at him. "See here, Tom. When you said, half joking, that your wings are all burned off, did you mean that you've gone such a pace with women that you're immune where they're concerned, or did you mean—well, what *did* you mean?"

"I meant," he said earnestly, "that a big conflagration has burned up all the small episodes of my past life."

Nancy opened her eyes wide.

"Oh, then you *do* care for Isabelle!"

Again he rose and moved about restlessly.

"Care! Good heavens!"

"Then you won't be cross with what I'm going to say," she said coaxingly.

5

"Say away! I won't be cross." But he spoke moodily and stood still, looking at her.

"Well, Tom, of course you must know that you and Bella are being awfully talked about."

He flamed up at once and took a step nearer to Nancy.

"Talked about! Yes, I dare say. Gossiped about and lied about, you mean. Just because I'm quite honest in my admiration for my neighbor's wife, and because Isabelle isn't a sneaking hypocrite, like some other women you and I know, Nancy, right in our own crowd!"

"Oh, that's all very fine," she said scornfully, "about your honest admiration! But, after all, there is a limit, you know, to the degree a man may *openly* admire another man's wife."

"I'm glad you put emphasis on the word *openly*." He gave a sarcastic laugh.

Nancy shrugged her shoulders.

"Well, naturally. A cat may look at a king!"

"So, coveting your neighbor's wife is all right, if you conceal the fact from your neighbor?"

"That's good ethics, isn't it?" she asked lightly.

"Ethics be damned! It's hypocrisy."

"Mercy! You are modern! And so you and Bella believe in shouting your *grande passion* from the housetops?"

"Not exactly that," he said more quietly, and sat down again.

"I should think it might grow a bit irksome for the husband!" Nancy laughed ironically.

Tom threw her a quick glance.

"I thought you said you weren't considering him."

"I'm not, except as it may affect Isabelle. But John Harding is nobody's fool, and three years of married life haven't decreased in the least his devotion to Isabelle. How long do you

think he's going to remain blind, deaf, and dumb?"

"If you think I have any wish to keep him blind, deaf, and dumb, you're mightily mistaken."

"Oh, indeed!" She raised her eyebrows at him. "Do you mean to say that you're prepared to face him with the brutal truth?"

"Certainly!"

"Then, why don't you?"

"I've been waiting for Isabelle to make up her mind," he said, frowning and staring at the burning logs.

"Oh," said Nancy, with a little whistle. "So that's it!" Impulsively she thrust out her hand to him. "Forgive me, Tommy! I did you an injustice. I got an idea into my head that Bella was one of the married women episodes—flirting, you know—which you've been addicted to."

"I've never flirted with Isabelle," he said quietly. "It's been dead earnest with me from the first time I met her."

A slight sound made them both turn their heads. In the broad archway leading to the library stood Isabelle Harding. She was a tall, blond girl of the brilliant type which would never fade. In spite of regular and not large features, her face was very much alive. There was a wide frankness in her dark-blue eyes which encouraged confidence, but the slight droop at the corners of her mobile lips made one wonder if she were ill-natured or merely discontented.

A sudden, happy smile swept the melancholy from her expression, as she went forward into the room.

"Conspirators!" she said gayly, as Nancy and Tom rose to greet her. "I've been looking all over the house for you, Nancy. It finally occurred to me you'd come in here where nobody else ever goes."

Tom stood silent, watching Isabelle with frankly adoring eyes. She put her arm around Nancy's plump little

shoulders, then turned, smiling, to Tom.

"How terribly serious you both look! Quite as if you were hatching up some naughty scheme—one of Nancy's, you know."

"I brought Tommy here to confess his sins," said Nancy, laughing.

"The pot and the kettle, you know," he said, smiling.

Isabelle's smile faded as quickly as it had come. She seemed nervous, even a little excited.

"Tom," she said suddenly, "do you mind? I want to see Nancy alone for a few minutes."

Without a word, he bowed and moved toward the archway.

"Tom!" Isabelle called after him. He stopped and turned to her. "Come back here in about ten minutes, will you? We've—we've something to talk over, you know."

He took a quick step back into the room.

"Aren't you going to let me take you home?"

"Yes," she said frankly, "I am. But I want to talk to you here in the light, where I can see you."

Nancy laughed.

"In for another lecture, Tommy. I can see that."

When he had left them, Nancy looked inquiringly at her friend.

"You seem so excited, dear. Whatever is the matter?"

Isabelle wanted to know if they had been talking about her. And had Tom told Nancy anything about—she did not say what, and Nancy admitted that she had corralled Tom in order to lecture him because of his attentions to Isabelle, which had become—well, rather compromising, Nancy thought. Isabelle, with an impatient gesture, drew away her arm.

"Oh, that idiotic word 'compromising!'" she said disgustedly.

Nancy lighted a cigarette and sat

down, before saying sarcastically that she had inferred from Tom's remarks that neither he nor Bella cared about conventions. Isabelle moved restlessly about the room, and spoke with sudden passion:

"I care enough about them to have gone on leading a so-called respectable life as John's wife, just because I hadn't the courage to throw my old traditions overboard."

"What would you gain if you did?"

"My freedom! John *might* give it to me, if I dared tell him how I really feel."

"Poor John! We've never hit it off, he and I, but do you know I'm sorry for him; aren't you?"

"Of course I'm sorry for him, but there's no use pretending that pity for him has held me back."

"Then, it's the fear of scandal?"

"Yes. Besides, I can't get a divorce that would be fair to him. Failure to understand isn't a legal cause—though God knows it's the best one. I certainly wouldn't ask a fine man like John to furnish any of those protexts required by our silly laws."

"How about incompatibility? That's cruelty—at Reno," suggested Nancy hopefully.

"My dear, you couldn't hire me to go to Reno, and anywhere else takes ages. I won't go through any such ordeal, anyway. All I can do is to run away and make John divorce me."

"You were always so impulsive, dear," murmured Nancy.

"If you call it impulsive," said Isabelle hotly, "to have gone on for a year, loving another man!"

"Many a woman goes on longer than that, Bella, living with her husband and loving some one else."

"Yes, and nine times out of ten it means intrigue. I'd never lower myself to having a lover in *that* sense!"

Then followed an attempt on Nancy's part to persuade Isabelle to tell her hus-

band the truth and trust to his pride and generosity. Isabelle insisted that John's pride would not weigh against the fact that he was in love with her.

"He's not the violent sort who'd kill any one, but he'd fight for me in his own quiet way."

"Well, that's not against him," said Nancy briefly.

"There's nothing against him, except the biggest thing in the world—he never understands me."

"Some men never do."

"And," added Isabella impatiently, "he keeps on loving me in that determined way he has, in spite of my coolness—when I love Tom. The whole situation is impossible!"

Nancy had a sudden inspiration.

"Bella! Have you thought of Paris? You and John can go there and get a perfectly good divorce. It costs a lot, but he wouldn't mind the expense."

Isabelle lighted a cigarette and gave a scornful little laugh.

"Wouldn't mind! You talk as if it would be a pleasure jaunt for John. Unless both parties to a divorce go to Paris, they have a devil of a time. And I wouldn't dream of asking John to leave his home and go to Paris just so I can get rid of him. Fancy the impertinence of the thing!"

Nancy's conclusion was that Isabelle certainly had a very decent way of acting. Isabelle stood still and looked at her with a deepening frown. Suddenly she dropped on the floor at Nancy's feet.

"Not so decent as you think," she murmured into Nancy's lap.

Then she told her that some weeks before, feeling it impossible to live with one man while in love with another, she had hinted maternity to her husband, knowing she could count on his consideration. Nancy was frankly shocked at such duplicity. Isabelle admitted that it was an abominable thing to have done. She said she would always hate herself

for that lie because he had wanted a child and would be so terribly disappointed. She knew she should have simply told John she no longer loved him. He was too high-minded to have made any claim on his wife after he knew she did not love him. But she had wanted time to decide on a definite final step.

"And have you decided?" Nancy asked her.

"Yes, I've decided." Isabelle looked up at her affectionately. "I wanted your judgment first, for you're the one friend I can trust."

"But you haven't asked my judgment."

"How can any one decide a thing like this but myself?" In her deep preoccupation, Isabelle missed the humor of her remark, but Nancy laughed at her. "I hope," Isabelle went on, "that you'll explain to our friends somehow."

"I'm afraid it will have to be somehow. But, tell me, dear, are you—is anything going to happen *right away*?" Nancy asked eagerly.

Isabelle hesitated.

"Not right away—at least, I don't think—I haven't quite decided——"

She broke off abruptly, as Tom entered the room.

"Want me to go away again?" he asked casually.

"No, Tom." Nancy jumped to her feet. "I want another fox trot before supper. I'll leave you two to fight it out. I'm sure," she said over her shoulder with a wicked little smile, "that there's something very important that you don't quite agree about."

Tom drew Isabelle to her feet and stood in front of her, holding her hands and looking intently into her eyes.

"Nancy is right—there's something we don't quite agree about, but I'm not going to give you a chance to discuss things any further. I've fully made up my mind."

"Oh, you have!" she laughed at him. "How about mine?"

"You promised your final decision to-night," he said earnestly, "and since my talk with Nancy, I've determined to know exactly where I stand. There's a steamer sailing to-morrow night and I'm——"

"To-morrow night!" she interrupted him.

"Yes, and I'm going to make reservations. Either *we* go or I go alone."

"Tom!" She seized his arm.

"I can't stand this uncertainty. God knows you've had time enough to come to a decision!"

Isabelle had merely hesitated on John's account, she said, and Tom reminded her that it had long been his desire to have it out with her husband, in the open. Tom felt convinced, he said, that Harding would give her a divorce on any ground, rather than be forced to get it himself. Yes, but John would be taking all the blame, she insisted.

"Well," said Tom, standing still, with his hands in his pockets. "There's no use discussing all that now. We agreed that if you did go with me, he wasn't to know until we had sailed. It's the wrong way, but it stands."

"It's the best way to spare him unnecessary pain."

"Perhaps," said Tom dubiously. "But I'd have liked to stand in a more decent position myself, and I'm so weak that I don't insist on it. Now, Isabelle, *do we go to-morrow night?*"

She hesitated.

"I couldn't possibly get ready."

"What rot!" He spoke impatiently, but suddenly he realized that she was only sparring for time. He took a quick step forward, threw his arm around her, and kissed her. She looked nervously over his shoulder to the archway.

"Look out, Tom! Not here, *please*; some one might come along." She gently pushed him from her. "Listen, dear!

There may be some alternative we haven't thought of."

"I accepted your decision, Bella," he said firmly. "Either separate definitely or stand together definitely. It must be one or the other."

She pondered a moment, then said thoughtfully:

"We can't go on this way. I suppose it has to be elopement or separation."

Tom walked nervously the length of the room and back again.

"You know," he said finally, "you're demanding a good deal of me when you insist on my running off with you this way—subjecting you to possible scandal."

She assured him that there would be no scandal; that John was generous and would make everything as easy for her as possible. When things were settled, they could marry at once in Italy.

He came toward her and spoke quietly.

"The steamer will sail at one or two a. m. We have to be on board by midnight."

"I was only going to take a few things in a steamer trunk. Marie can probably get me ready."

"What will you do about your trunk?"

"I'll take it with me in a taxi, with my bags, to your apartment, some time to-morrow—probably in the morning. You can send it to the steamer with your own things. I'd better leave home fairly early in the day. If I wait till the afternoon, something might come up to make it difficult for me to get away."

He smiled happily at her, then bent suddenly and kissed her.

"You darling! That's a bully scheme! Come over about noon. That will give me time to get our reservations, and I'll tell you about it when I meet you at my place. Then we'll go separately to the steamer and meet casually on board that night."

"No, dear," she smiled up at him. "The next morning, if you don't mind, Tom."

For answer, he kissed her again; then he asked her if she intended to leave a note for Harding.

"What's the use? When John knows I've gone"—she laughed softly—"if I go—he will understand everything. A letter of explanation, justification, would be absurd. And merely to state that I have gone would be a bit superfluous."

She withdrew from his arm and, walking to one of the windows, listened to the roaring wind. Tom stood silent, watching her. Presently she turned and walked back to where he stood. She frowned, and the corners of her mouth drooped.

"I'm a rotten egotist to seek my own happiness! But John isn't happy with me—he never has been and never will be! I honestly believe that, after the first year of our marriage, I bored him. He so often disapproves of me and my way of doing things. But he's got such an imagination that he twists realities to suit himself. He can't see that we're not really mated at all."

Tom looked very serious.

"You loved him when you married him."

"Oh, yes, in a way. I believed and made him believe that my failure to abandon myself to emotion came from a modesty peculiar to refined and respectable women." She gave a low, scornful laugh. "When I began to understand that a woman doesn't debase herself when she feels, I began to fear that I was incapable of deep feeling. But, you see, John never—appealed to me particularly."

"You mean—physically?" Tom asked bluntly.

She nodded her head.

"And you are quite sure that I——" He hesitated.

"Yes, Tom," she said very softly.

Then she smiled brightly. "And you never bore me, dear."

He did not smile as he said seriously:

"Perhaps I may some time."

She assured him that he would not; that they were on the same plane and understood each other. John had always been so superior, she couldn't live up to him. He was so good and high-minded that he made her feel small and ineffectual—a hateful feeling. And he demanded too much of her intellectually. At first, his exactions had worried her, and, finally, they had bored her to death.

"He says," she ended, "that I've let my mind go to sleep; that it's the fault of the life I've been leading for two years."

Tom caressed her hair.

"I guess the same might be said about a good many of us. Perhaps we might improve a bit, you and I, on that score. Help each other, you know," he finished vaguely.

She smiled at him.

"That's it—help each other. I've never been able to help John, and I got tired of being hauled up by the nonintellectual hairs of my head."

Tom laughed. Then, as she drew him toward the archway, he held back.

"I won't go a step till you give me your word of honor about to-morrow night."

"I promise, Tom."

As he drew her to him and kissed her, their ears caught a gay, seductive air that the orchestra was playing.

"Hark!" she whispered. "Do you remember—we heard that the night you first told me you loved me? I've always loved that song ever since!"

"Darling!" he whispered back, listening to the music. "It's astounding how music thrills you when it reminds you of the woman you love."

She laughed suddenly.

"Do you know, it's odd, but John

can't stand that song. I've found I can irritate him into silence, when he starts lecturing me, just by humming that thing. It fairly drives him out of the room. Come," she added gayly, "let's have one more dance, then we'll have some supper and then"—she smiled radiantly at him—"you can take me home."

He frowned as he followed her through the archway to the room beyond.

"I wish," he said, bending his head, "that it were to-morrow night, instead of to-night, and that I could take you anywhere except to what you call—home."

She smiled into his serious young eyes as they glided out upon the ballroom floor.

II.

John Harding knocked hesitatingly on his wife's bedroom door.

There was time for a rush of many hurried thoughts through his brain, and he was on the point of knocking again, when the door opened and Marie, the maid, stood respectfully aside to let him pass in. He had a swift vision of his wife, seated at her dressing table, across the room. Her unbound hair fell over her face, partly concealing it, but in the mirror their eyes met. There was a look of cold inquiry in hers which made him hesitate on the threshold.

"May I come in and smoke a cigarette with you, Isabelle?" He tried to speak lightly.

He saw the small, vertical line which formed quickly between her brows, and instinctively he drew back into the shadows of the open doorway.

"Certainly! Come in if you like. Marie has only just begun to brush my hair, so you will have time for a cigarette or two." Her well-bred voice was softly courteous and, with a turn of her wrist, she indicated the cushioned lounge near the fire.

"Make yourself comfortable," she added.

He had stepped into the room, but now again he halted, looking from Isabelle to the maid.

"Well, the fact is, there's something I'd like to talk over with you. I know it's awfully late!" He smiled deprecatingly. "Shall I come back when you are alone?"

Isabelle looked at her husband's face. It was tranquil and friendly, but something in his deep-gray eyes determined her. A very slight ripple of the chiffon and lace of her dressing gown suggested the motion of the shoulders underneath. She half turned in her chair.

"You may go, Marie; I shall not need you again to-night. Give me the brush, please."

As the maid left the room and closed the door, Isabelle picked up a tortoiseshell cigarette case, lying among her brushes.

"I think you will like these," she remarked casually, as she handed it to her husband.

"Thanks." He took the dainty monogrammed trifle and turned it over in his hand once or twice, but only his outward perceptions were alive to the object he held. After a moment, he lifted his head, took out a cigarette, lighted it, and, with a movement as of coming back to the smaller realities, drew an armchair up to the fire.

John was a tall man, large boned and spare. His head, with its thick, straight, dark hair, rose from his shoulders in clean, firm lines. He had a wide mouth, with large teeth, and lips neither full nor thin, which expressed in repose strength, rather than severity. His smile came more readily in response to joy than humor. It was his mouth which indicated the sensitive fiber of the man, and his eyes, deep-set under dark brows, which showed the imaginative quality of his mind. He had the head of a pagan god, and a face illumined by the fires and tenderness of a large soul.

His silk lounging robe, for which he

had discarded his dinner jacket, was of deep wine color. In the subdued lighting of the room and the shifting reds and blues of the burning log, reflected against the folds of the long robe, he suggested some classic, frescoed figure of the Old World, rather than a conventional image of the new.

His glance wandered over the room, lighted only by softly shaded candles and the grate fire, and fell in turn on the richly carved mahogany four-poster, the dancing firelight reflected on its smooth surfaces; the silken eiderdown; the soft, embroidered linen, turned down, ready to receive its mistress. His eyes roved to the reading lamp and the little table beneath it which seemed too fragile for its load of magazines and novels. Slowly, his gaze returned to the dressing table with its gleaming ivory, and in its mirror the reflection of the woman who was his wife. From the reflection he looked at the woman herself, one round white arm, from which the lace sleeve fell away to the shoulder, poised, ready for the slow downward sweep of the brush.

It was a long time since John had sat by candle and firelight in his wife's bedroom. What exquisite hair she had! Such a shimmer of fine, dull gold—and the length and thickness of it! He had almost forgotten that Isabelle had such hair. And that exquisite line from the tip of her firm, rounded chin to the edge of her small, pink ear!

Slowly he began to absorb the subtle sweetness of the room. His eyes fell on a vase of pink roses whose delicate perfume seemed to give a definite excuse for the appeal to his senses. Then back his glance wandered to his wife.

"You have wonderful hair, Isabelle!"

He had not meant to say anything so banal, but the words came in spite of him.

Abruptly she rose, put down the brush, and walked over to the lounge,

Then she lighted a cigarette and looked steadily at her husband.

"Well, John, I thought you had something to talk to me about. It's pretty late; hadn't you better begin?" There was no warmth in her large blue eyes, no encouragement, and his heart contracted. His eyes, somber with thought, studied her for a moment in desperate effort to see fairly with her vision and to approach her understandingly.

She held the glowing cigarette between her slender fingers, and through half-closed lids she lazily watched the small column of blue smoke as it curled and twisted its way upward. Her head was half buried in a cushion, one cheek, with its delicate pink bloom, sharply outlined against the gold mass of her hair.

John could make out little from the quiet repose of her face. Her mouth had the yielding softness of a beautiful woman's, tempered by a certain firmness often seen on the lips of women accustomed to command. He realized that it is not easy to read a woman's thoughts from the expression of her mouth, and less easy, still, when she is conscious of being watched. Her eyes were veiled by her long, dark lashes. She was making it very hard for him, but he had courage and patience.

He blew a cloud of smoke into the air, then he plunged into the silence which seemed to be taking on a tangible thickness between them.

"Won't you meet me halfway, dear?" His deep voice trembled slightly on the little word which, of late, had been rare between them, and her lips curved in a smile. But it was a smile without mirth or promise.

"We've drifted pretty far apart, you and I, and I've just begun to realize that we're drifting farther every day. I determined to come to you to-night and talk things over and see if we can't"—he hesitated, and his fine eyes held a depth of appeal—"can't get together

somewhere; some common ground of mutual understanding."

She moved her head restlessly, but did not look at him.

"What is your particular grievance at this moment, John?" Her tone sounded idly curious.

"Did I say I had a grievance?" He spoke with extreme gentleness, but his eyes grew wistful, and his lips took on firmer lines.

"Not specifically, but you have had so many, you know, it's safe to assume that you have another."

His faults were those of a man whose egotism takes the form of undue sensitiveness, and whose exactions upon others are out of proportion to his interest in or dependence upon them. His exactions with Isabelle had been for her own good, but he would have exerted more influence upon her life, had he been less morbidly sensitive where she was concerned.

"I suppose we both have our grievances, real or imagined." His voice sounded suddenly tired. "I fancy all husbands and wives have; we're probably no exceptions. But I haven't come here to discuss that, dear; I have no desire to annoy you to-night with old or new grievance. I just want to try to understand you, to get nearer to you if I can, and—and help you." His voice vibrated with a very real emotion.

She did not answer for a moment; then:

"Since when have you felt inspired by so much altruism, John?" She watched him with a delicate, feline appraisal of the little self-betrays of which a man is never conscious.

Slowly a dull red crept up from his throat to his temples.

"Ever since our conversation a month ago when you told me——"

"Ah!" There was something in the small and murmured exclamation that spurred him to self-defense.

"You remember the beginning of our talk that night?"

"Yes," she dryly interjected, "I certainly do! You told me I was dragging you to the poorhouse, or words to that effect; that I was a type of the ultra-extravagant wife, and that I would have to live the simple life, and so forth."

"I was probably a bit severe," John answered quietly. "I didn't mean to be, but, you see, dear, I'm not a millionaire, after all, and we have been getting in pretty deep. I felt that I must try to make you see reason."

"Does it occur to you, John, that, after a man has given his wife absolutely free rein for three years, and never held her to account for any expenses, and apparently gloried in and encouraged her expenditures, it is slightly unreasonable for him suddenly to turn and rend her for extravagance, especially when she knows he hasn't lost his money?"

"Does it occur to you, Isabelle, that, after three years of what you call glorying in his wife's expenditures, a husband may begin to realize that these same expenditures are on the increase, far out of proportion to his financial success?"

"Well, why didn't you begin right when we married, by letting me know just what your income was? I wasn't extravagant to start with, but you let me think that there was no limit to your resources. You loved to see me in pretty clothes, and I suppose I gradually spent more and more, without realizing it."

She had finished her cigarette, and now she straightened her lithe body, dropped her slipped feet to the rug, crossed her knees, and, with her hands clasped behind her head, looked directly at her husband.

It suddenly struck him that what she had just remarked was the most just and sensible thing he had ever heard her say. He vaguely wondered if there were

depths in Isabelle which he had failed to reach.

"I suppose you are right, dear. I did treat you like an ignorant child when I married you—I mean as regards money matters. I guess American husbands are all alike in that respect."

"Always philosophical, John, but, for once, very reasonable. So you didn't want to lecture me on extravagance to-night?"

"No, Isabelle, no, I haven't wanted to lecture you about anything. Months ago I made a tentative effort to make you understand about my affairs, but you seemed bored and inclined to resent what you thought was faultfinding. I couldn't bear that—we had never had scenes, you know—so I dropped it. But our expenses have been frightfully on the increase, and that night, a month ago, I made up my mind to have it all out with you, and then"—his voice grew very tender—"then you told me something that rather took the wind out of my sails. My one idea since has been to make you happy, dear, but you have been so unapproachable! I can't seem to get near you in any sense. To-night I felt I could not bear it any longer."

He had stopped smoking, and, as he leaned eagerly forward in his chair, a sudden leap of flame from the half-burned log threw his strong, lean face into sharp relief against the semiobscurity of the room, and the little hollows at his temples and in his cheeks took on deeper shadows.

"Have we ever been very 'near,' as you call it?" she asked. "Haven't we always cared for different people and things?"

John's earnest face grew very grave, but in his deep eyes there came the light of a new resolve.

"Yes, Isabelle, we have, and I suppose I've often bored you. But, oh, my dear, won't you *try* to care for some of the things I like, not because I like them, but because they are worth while?

Come with me to hear good music; read good books—not such books as you have over there.” He pointed to the table under the reading lamp, with its motley assortment of popular novels. “Try to enjoy some of my friends—the men, I mean; I have no particular women friends, and you don’t care very much for women, anyway. Won’t you, dear, try, for your sake and for my sake, and for the sake of—”

He broke off abruptly and rose and walked over to the lounge. He stood looking down at his wife, and she moved restlessly under his gaze.

“Isabelle, look at me!” There was a sharp and unaccustomed note of command in his voice. She did look up, and then she reached for another cigarette. “I know I’m a prosy old badger, and I don’t expect to satisfy you at all points. I want you to meet and know other men, but, for God’s sake, won’t you choose the right *sort* of men?”

“Ah!” The small word, as it came out from between her lips, held a world of meaning. “Why not be brutally frank, John, and tell me you object to my friendship with Tom Carewe?”

“I do!” he said vehemently.

“Well,” she drawled, “just what have you against Tom—apart, of course, from his attentions to me? He’s not dissipated and he doesn’t run round after women. It strikes me he’s pretty decent, compared to men we know—married men, some of them,” she added maliciously.

“I’m not concerned as to Carewe’s morals,” said John coldly. “Physical jealousy is a pretty low expression of love, and you know that I have absolute faith in you.”

She stared at him.

“Then what is it?”

“Carewe is lightweight; he’s not interested in serious things; or if he is, I haven’t discovered it, and I don’t believe you have.”

“No, I haven’t,” she said with smiling irony, which goaded him.

“Carewe wastes your time,” he persisted tactlessly. “Surely he doesn’t stimulate you mentally! He appeals only to your lighter side. What good can such a friendship do you?”

“Well,” she answered with her slow, irritating smile, “you see, he amuses me and he never bores me. We understand one another,” she ended with slow emphasis.

John winced.

“Which is saying that I *don’t* understand you and that I bore you.”

More gently she answered:

“You’re inclined to take life too seriously, John. I know you’ve had lots to worry you and all that, but there is another side to life, you know.”

“I suppose,” he said quietly, “that I’ve forgotten how to play. It’s a weakness of American business men. But I have tried desperately hard to understand you, dear. Don’t you think that if you tried to meet me halfway, to sympathize with my serious interests, things might be very different between us?”

Vaguely he realized that his mind was inelastic, for all its versatility. He could never rebound easily from grave to gay. This was what so worried her in her lighter moods, for she skimmed the surfaces of life and regarded serious persons as unmitigated bores. She had not loved him well enough to compromise, or with tender railery to quicken his halting sense of humor.

Suddenly some impulse moved her; some stirring of pity for the strong man before her; some compunction for the small part she was playing in his life. She looked up at him, her lips parted in a wan smile. Then she held her hands up to him and he caught them quickly and held them pressed together.

“I’m sorry I haven’t tried harder to understand, John. I really am, for I’m afraid it’s pretty late to begin.”

“No, no, nothing is ever too late!”

An intensity of conviction rang in his voice, and the yearning in his eyes hurt her. She shivered a little and watched him, fascinated. Still holding her hands, he sat down close beside her.

"Isabelle, darling, don't, I beseech you, be so cold with me! Your growing indifference for months past has held me at arm's length. I suppose you imagined I didn't care so much. Look at me, child! Don't look down that way; I want to see your eyes. I have never cared less for one hour; I have loved you with all my heart! And if I have seemed to find fault at times, it was only because I loved you too well to let you go after the false gods unchecked, and because"—he faltered—"because I wanted to do my living and growing with you and not without you."

Isabelle drew one hand away and pushed back a long strand of hair which had fallen over her face. The glow of pity had faded from her eyes and she looked straight ahead of her. She said quietly:

"When you made love to me and married me, John, you appeared quite satisfied with me as you found me. Afterward, when your criticisms of my tastes and opinions and friends, of everything, it seems, that I did or thought, grew more and more frequent, I naturally felt that you were thoroughly dissatisfied with me. I suppose that did not occur to you. I really haven't changed a bit, you know; I'm just the same, perhaps more so, that's all."

"More so, that's all." John repeated her words dully.

He had released her fingers, and both of his large, thin hands were outspread on his knees. His head was bent on his breast and his eyes were fixed on the smoldering embers of the fire. He went on in an even tone:

"Perhaps that's the keynote of the situation. What you were before I married you—I mean the things about you which have kept you outside of my in-

ner life, were vague in outline, so vague I didn't perceive them. When I became conscious of them, I wanted to fight them, to dispel them, because I felt and still feel that they are only one side of the woman I loved. You thought I should have been content with that side. You thought my trying to help you to understand and love another side of life meant that I loved you less." Again he looked straight before him and his eyes were dark with pain.

Isabelle put a hand on his arm.

"John, dear, I wish I *had* understood! I wish, oh, I do, really, that I had gone on trusting your love; and tried to develop my hidden ego which you believe in. I loved you, I thought, as much as I was capable of loving, and when you seemed to care less, why, it made me indifferent. It was my own fault, but I don't think I could have lived up to your standard, anyway, dear. I didn't realize how high it was, I suppose, when I married you. You see, it all comes down to this: we marry the outside and we get the inside, and then—the deluge!" She ended with a laugh, and then began to hum softly the air John so disliked. She did not do it maliciously; it was a thoughtless impulse.

"For Heaven's sake, don't be cynical, Isabelle! And *please* don't sing that thing to-night. You know that I didn't love you simply for your beauty and your charm. I loved you for what—" He stopped lamely, and she quickly took him up.

"For what you imagined me to be. It all comes to the same thing, my dear. Anyway, your faultfinding hurt me, your higher-plane ideas irritated me, and, finally, your objections to my extravagance angered me. You can see it all, can't you, John?"

"Yes, I can, and because we both see, we can make a fresh start. We *must* do it! Oh, dearest, I love you!" His deep voice broke, and he put his arm about her and drew her to him.

Her shoulders were covered by the loose fall of hair and he could not see her face. He bent and gently pressed his lips into the resilient softness of the curls over her temple. Then he kissed her forehead, her eyes, and then, with a sudden movement of passion—of passion long denied—he found her mouth. She lay in his arms, quiescent, but, as his lips on hers grew more fervent, she began to resist him gently; then more firmly she put her hands on his shoulders, trying to push him from her. She said:

"I'm very tired, John, dear, and we've had a long talk. Do you mind letting me go to bed now?"

At once he was all tender compunction.

"Yes, sweetheart, forgive me. I will go now."

He kissed her again on her eyes, tenderly, reverently, as a man kisses a woman when he wants to put her above his physical yearning for her.

"Good night, dearest."

"Good night, John." Her voice trembled, but his own emotion was so strong that he did not notice it. "I'm sorry I——" Her voice trailed off, as he softly closed the door of the room behind him.

In the fireplace, the big log had long since fallen apart, and now its two halves glowed dully on either side of the brass andirons. The candles burned low in their sockets. Outdoors, a fine sleet was falling, and now and again the February wind blew it spitefully against the window panes.

On the lounge, John's wife sat with her hands folded in her lap, her head thrown back against the cushions. Her eyes, half closed, were fixed unblinking on the dying fire. She had not stirred since John left her ten minutes before.

A stronger blast from the wintry night struck sharply against the windows on

the north side of the room. Isabelle started, and with a sudden relief from tension, she rose to her feet, threw her arms above her head, and, with a long intake of breath, which was something between a sigh and a moan, she walked to one of the west windows, parted the curtains, and, shading her eyes from the soft light of the room, she gazed out upon the stormy night.

Across the deserted Avenue, the park lay still and white under its covering of icy sleet. The light rain of the afternoon had soon frozen and now formed a thin coating of ice on the sidewalks and the streets. The spirit of the frozen night, silent except for the frequent gusts of wind, seemed to enter into the woman watching at the window. She shivered, stepped back into the warm room, and pulled the curtains close. Then a sudden impulse drew her to the mantel, straight in front of John's picture in its old Florentine frame of maroon leather and dull gold. The pictured eyes looked down at her with their all-embracing truth and tenderness.

Suddenly she stepped to an old mahogany dresser and from an upper drawer took out a small, folding, leather frame. She carried it to the mantel, opened it, and gazed intently at the picture it contained, and then upward to the face in the Florentine frame. The small photograph was that of a man about twenty-eight, with a deeply cleft chin, a beautiful mouth, a nose with sensitive nostrils, and dark, tempestuous eyes set wide apart—eyes which were the keynote of the face, and which expressed openly the reckless abandon of temperament which was only suggested by the lines of lips and chin. It was not a bad face, not even a weak one, but it showed a nature uncontrolled by will or destiny.

From one face to the other Isabelle looked, then quickly she bent her head over the small frame. A soft tap sounded at her door, and with a swift

rush to the dresser, she thrust the frame back into the drawer. Then she said:

"Come in."

Marie stepped softly into the room and stood demurely looking at her mistress.

"Why did you not go to bed, Marie? I told you not to come back to-night." She spoke to her maid in French, with the rapid assurance and delicate accent of the American who, in girlhood, has learned her French in Paris convents.

"I thought perhaps madame might desire something, so I waited, but madame did not ring, so I came to see."

"No, Marie, there is nothing I need you for. Good night."

The girl gave Isabelle a keen look; then she stepped back to the door and, with her hand on the knob, she turned again toward the silent woman, standing by the dresser. With lowered lids she said:

"Pardon, madame, but—has madame perhaps changed her mind?"

A rush of blood turned the exquisite pink and white of Isabelle's face into a dull red. She drew herself up and looked her maid straight in the eyes, her own bright with annoyance.

"No, I have not changed my mind, Marie."

The girl stepped hastily into the hall, closing the door behind her.

III.

When John awoke the belated morning light was creeping into the room, and through the unshuttered windows he looked out upon the treetops of the park, glistening like Venetian glass in their shrouds of frozen moisture. He knew those treetops in all their changing moods and seasons, but especially was he familiar with them in the half hour after waking, when it was his habit to lie watching the delicate tracery of the trees against the sky, and dreaming—for be it known that John was a

dreamer, although no one acquainted with him in his workaday world ever suspected it.

He had not slept as a man of sound body and mind should sleep. He had been restless and his dreams constant and grotesque.

When he had reached his room after leaving Isabelle he had sat by his own spent fire, thinking the long, long thoughts of a man who has reached a milestone in his life. He rejoiced that he had made a supreme effort to reach out and grasp the elusive spirit of his wife's love and understanding. He never doubted that he understood her, nor questioned his power ultimately to attune her mind to his. Above all, he must have patience and tenderness for her errors of judgment—for thus he termed her past inability or disinclination to rise to his plane—and absolute trust in her essential fineness and sweetness of nature.

John was above all an optimist, but as he sat in the growing darkness and chill of his room, a creeping doubt of his power to shape the future overtook his soaring spirit and brought it earthward.

As he descended to the breakfast room he met Marie on the stairs, carrying a tray.

"*Bon jour, monsieur.*" Marie's demure face and perfect manners somehow irritated him more than usual.

"Good morning, Marie." He halted abruptly. "Will you ask your mistress if I may see her for a moment before I leave the house?"

The maid inclined her head and her eyes were lowered as she said:

"*Certainement, monsieur,* I will ask madame and give you her answer." Then she went on with her tray and John proceeded to his breakfast.

He was not one of the men who dislike the very sight of women at the breakfast table, but Isabelle thought that no self-respecting woman should hazard

encounter with the uncertain vagaries of the male disposition before they have been duly appeased by coffee and its attendant benefactions.

As he rose from the table, Marie curt-sied in the doorway and said:

"*Milles pardons, monsieur*, but madame begs you will excuse her this morning, as she slept very badly and has a severe headache. She is going to try to sleep a little now. She wishes me to say good-by to monsieur. She is very sorry she cannot see him."

"Very well, Marie. Tell Mrs. Harding I shall be home by five o'clock."

"*Oui, monsieur*." And the trim little figure vanished.

John got into his motor and took the chauffeur's seat. The tension of nerves and brain quickened his faculties and prepared him for the day's struggles. The congestion of traffic was more of a menace than usual because of the slippery asphalt. By the time he reached his office his brain was clear, his eyes bright with the exhilaration of the ride, and in his heart a growing lightness.

Driscoll, Avery & Harding, architects, occupied a suite of offices in the tower of the Colonial Building, high above the hurrying crowd of human beings who swarmed the busy thoroughfare. Although the youngest member of the firm, John was by no means the least important, for he had a keen imagination and artistic ability. The finer questions of design and execution were referred to him for the final judgment.

Arrived at the office, in some intangible way his depression had disappeared, and again an elation, stronger than at first, possessed him. In this state of mind the morning seemed shorter than usual, and, at the stroke of one, he started uptown for a luncheon engagement at the Engineers' Club.

The pavements were covered with a coating of ice on which horses slipped

and machines skidded. In spite of the heavy chains on the wheels, the brakes were of little avail. Slowly, the automobile threaded its way through the busy streets. At Madison Square they turned into Fifth Avenue; and at Thirty-fourth Street there was the usual block. John had to stop and wait for the cars to cross the Avenue. A second later, he heard the piercing scream of a woman above the din of traffic, and then a crash of breaking glass and splintering wood. He knew that an accident had occurred on the north side of Thirty-fourth Street, but he could see nothing because a trolley car stood in front of him.

He left the machine to James and started on foot toward the scene of the accident with the impulse to give any assistance in his power. People were rushing excitedly forward and he hurried across with the rest.

A few steps found him in the midst of a struggling, jostling crowd. The street was already blocked on either side by vehicles of every description. The confused cries of angry teamsters mingled with the gruff, sharp commands of tall policemen; the clatter of steel-shod hoofs on the asphalt pavement rang in noisy accompaniment to the discord of warning signals from numberless automobile horns, and the clang of street-car gongs.

He forced his way through the crowd and succeeded in approaching near enough to discover the cause of the accident. A large van headed toward Sixth Avenue was tipped precariously on one side; an overturned taxicab, with its front a total wreck, and an electric street car, which had been crossing Fifth Avenue toward Madison, were mixed in an inextricable mass. The still form of the chauffeur lay stretched on the pavement covered with a lap robe.

Saddened by the piteous spectacle, he half turned to go, when the shifting crowd separated and revealed a police-

man kneeling on the sidewalk supporting the drooping figure of a woman. John now remembered the cry which had preceded the crash and pushed a little nearer. As he did so, the policeman moved and he saw the face of the woman. For a second the blackness of night descended; then he sprang forward, desperately thrusting those who stood in his way to either side, and flung himself on his knees beside her. Immediately a heavy hand grasped him by the shoulder and he was unceremoniously dragged to his feet. A deep bass voice sounded close to his ear.

"Here, you'll have to get back!" it said. "You can't crowd in that way!"

He turned on his persecutor, his eyes flashing, his voice trembling with passion.

"Good God!" he cried. "Can't you see? It's my wife!"

The officer removed his hand.

"I'm sorry, sir. I didn't know. The lady's pretty bad off. We've sent for the ambulance."

John dropped again to his knees and took Isabelle's inanimate body from the supporting arms of the policeman. Tenderly he brushed back the disordered mass of dull gold hair from her white forehead.

"She's not dead," he muttered.

There was confusion in his brain. The clang of the ambulance bell aroused him and some one spoke:

"Where do you want her to go, sir?"

Mechanically he gave his home address.

Together the ambulance surgeon and John lifted her to the waiting litter and carried her to the ambulance. Then, for the first time, his brain cleared. He took a fountain pen and paper from his pocket and hastily wrote a note which he gave to one of the officers.

"Please send this message. - Here's money to pay for it." He placed a bill in the policeman's hands.

"I'll follow in my car," he said, turn-

ing to the surgeon. "For God's sake, hurry!"

John hurried to his machine.

"James!" he called. "Mrs. Harding has met with an accident. Follow the ambulance, and be quick!"

He flung himself into the car and sank back on the seat in a state of utter exhaustion. As they sped up the Avenue, his heart turned cold at the thought that he had used the machine, never thinking to ask her if she wished to use it instead of her electric brougham, which she was obliged to run herself, as they had but one chauffeur. But, if she had wanted the car and James, why had she not telephoned for them?

They were now directly behind the ambulance and he leaned forward eagerly in an attempt to catch a glimpse of Isabelle, but the figure of the surgeon blocked the opening. In a few seconds, they reached the house. He sprang out and raced up the steps. The butler answered his call.

"Mrs. Harding has met with an accident," he explained. "Where is Marie?"

"Oh, my poor lady!" the man cried. "Is she badly hurt?"

"We don't know yet. Call Marie!"

The man hesitated.

"Marie left this morning, sir. I thought she went with madame."

In his distracted state of mind, John paid little attention to Simpson's remark.

"Well, never mind," he said. "Call one of the maids and send her to Mrs. Harding's room at once."

As they carried her into the cheery bedroom, the memory of his parting with her, not so many hours before, came to him vividly. He vaguely wondered that so short an interval could seem so long in retrospect.

They lowered Isabelle to the couch, and John stood tense and silent while the young hospital surgeon bent over her, his fingers on the fluttering pulse,

his eyes attentively noting the faint rise and fall of her breast.

For a moment John stood meditating. Then he knelt on the floor beside the couch. A mist came over his eyes as he pressed his lips to the slim white hand. Then he raised his head and frowned. His frown deepened as the moments passed.

Isabelle was wearing a traveling coat over her tailored suit; a dark chiffon veil still clung to her hat. Was it possible that she had intended going out of town? Something unexpected must have arisen. But what could it have been? Where had she been going? His reflections were cut short by the entrance of Doctor Bowyer. He sprang to his feet and stepped forward to meet him, and silently the young hospital surgeon withdrew.

"I'm thankful that you could come at once, doctor." Harding turned his head toward the couch and then he looked at Dr. Bowyer with an expression of piteous fear.

"I've brought a nurse with me." The doctor's gruff voice was very kindly. He seemed to grasp the whole situation. He deposited his surgical case on a chair and turned to the door.

"Come in, Miss Atwood."

The trained nurse entered and together they approached the unconscious patient. After an examination, Doctor Bowyer turned to John.

"No broken bones, John, but she has had a severe concussion of the brain. Come into the library and we'll talk it over while Miss Atwood is getting her settled in bed."

John did not speak until they reached the library, then he faced the doctor and said briefly:

"Will she recover?"

"Why, of course she'll recover." The very tone of the doctor's voice was reassuring. "She's young and strong and has everything in her favor. Just give

her a little time, and with careful nursing she'll soon be as well as ever."

John turned abruptly and walked to one of the windows. For some minutes he stood looking down into the street below. The doctor pushed a huge leather chair up to the fireplace. A cheerful fire blazed beneath the great chimney piece. It was a cozy room, despite its size. Low bookshelves on three sides of the room crowded with books. A long table with books and magazines and a parchment-shaded lamp. Soft Oriental rugs, covering the polished floors. An old Colonial clock with its somber tick-tick, in a corner of the room. Here and there a rare piece of bronze. On the walls a few fine etchings.

John turned from the window and paced restlessly up and down the length of the room. Presently he came to a halt near the doctor.

"Do you think there is any danger that this shock to Isabelle's brain will lead to mental trouble?" he asked.

"Frankly no, I do not. I have known cases where a blow on the head caused a certain confusion of ideas which persisted for a variable length of time after all ordinary symptoms of concussion had disappeared. They are rare, however, and, anyway, the outcome is usually favorable."

John resumed his restless tramp.

Doctor Bowyer watched him for a moment in silence. Then he said:

"Come, sit down, John, and tell me how it happened. You mustn't allow yourself to get so upset. Isabelle has escaped mortal injury and there's no reason why you should be so anxious."

John felt unspeakably nervous and overwrought. He drew up a chair near the doctor's and sat down with his elbows on his knees, his chin resting in his hands, gazing unseeing at the blazing logs.

"I can't understand it." He spoke slowly, as if he were groping for his

ideas. "When Isabelle goes out in the forenoon and doesn't wish to use the brougham, she always tells me and I send the limousine back to her, or else I go downtown on the subway. Why on earth did she take a public taxi when she knows I dread the recklessness of their chauffeurs?"

"Oh, well, she will be able to tell you all about that later. Tell me about the accident."

"There really isn't much to tell," said John in a colorless voice. He briefly described the accident and his discovery that his wife had been injured. The doctor listened attentively. His large figure remained impassive, but his alert brown eyes, behind their heavy-rimmed spectacles, were alive with interest.

"The old story," he commented, as John concluded. "Reckless driving and an icy pavement."

"But what puzzles me," John went on, "is the fact that Isabelle was evidently dressed for a journey. I believe she was on her way to the Pennsylvania Station, for the taxi had just turned west at Thirty-second Street."

With a quick lift of his head, the doctor asked: "Well, hasn't she any friends or relatives whom she might suddenly desire to visit?"

"Yes, she might have been going to Morristown." His voice sounded tired, and troubled lines showed in his face. What could *not* be explained, was why Isabelle should have decided to visit any one out of town and have deliberately started off without giving him the slightest intimation. She had never done anything of the kind before.

The doctor rose briskly.

"I'm going back to the bedroom," he said. "You'd better remain here until I make another examination and give Miss Atwood directions. I'll be back presently."

John did not reply. In spite of what the doctor said, he was worried. He had often heard and read of the pe-

culiar mental conditions which are likely to follow blows on the head. He recalled a similar accident which had resulted in the insanity and subsequent death of the victim. As an undercurrent to these disturbing speculations, there ran through his mind, with irritating reiteration, the perplexing questions which had alternated with his anxiety and suspense.

The regular, insistent tick of the old clock wore on his nerves. No other sound broke the stillness. He jumped to his feet and tramped up and down, his hands clasped behind him and his head sunk on his chest. His heart ached dully and his brain had become tired and confused. Unconsciously he counted his steps—one—two—three—four—with maddening regularity, until he thought that if he did not stop, he would go on counting forever. His endurance was almost at an end when the door opened and Doctor Bowyer said briskly:

"Isabelle is coming along well. You must stop worrying. There's no cause for it, and you are only making matters worse."

John stood still and faced him with troubled eyes.

"Is she still unconscious?"

Doctor Bowyer poked the fire vigorously and sat down before replying.

"John, I'm going to be frank with you, for I realize that any attempt on my part to conceal Isabelle's condition will only serve to increase your anxiety."

"Then she's worse," John groaned. "I knew it!"

"Now, for goodness' sake, hold on a minute!" the doctor interrupted. "Let me have my say. Isabelle is *not* worse. Her brain has been very severely shocked. She is still unconscious and will probably remain so for some hours. There are no broken bones, no internal injuries, and her ultimate recovery is certain. But you will have to take a

firmer grip on things. Make up your mind to be patient for a few hours longer."

John's face cleared a little.

"I'm most grateful to you, old friend! I'll do my best, but it's pretty hard." He resumed his restless walk as he continued: "This has been a frightful shock to me. I have been thinking over cases I have known where less serious injuries to the head have led to terrible and permanent consequences."

"Oh, nonsense! Be sensible and let's deal with the matter as it stands."

John apparently paid no attention to the doctor's remark, and a moment later burst out impulsively:

"It's all so strange and inexplicable! That I should be almost at the very spot when the accident occurred! And where was Isabelle going?"

"Why, my dear man, undoubtedly she was on her way to the Pennsylvania Station, as you suggested. Have you inquired if she left any word for you?"

"By Jove, I never thought of it! I'll find out now."

He stepped forward quickly and rang an electric bell. A maid answered his call.

"Julia, did Mrs. Harding leave any message for me before she went out this morning?" he asked.

"No, sir, she did not."

"Well, tell Marie I should like to see her at once."

The maid's eyes opened wide with surprise.

"Marie has gone away, Mr. Harding. She left the house with Mrs. Harding."

"Left the house with Mrs. Harding!" he repeated in amazement. Then, recovering himself, he asked quietly: "Are you sure of this, Julia?"

The girl hesitated.

"Well, I don't know for sure, sir. I was working upstairs, and when I came down Mrs. Harding and Marie were

both gone and I supposed they had left together."

"Did Marie say when she was coming back?"

"No, sir, she did not, but I don't think she's coming back. She sent her things away several days ago. I thought you knew, sir, that she was going to leave."

John was nonplused, but realizing the futility of further questioning, he said:

"Very well, Julia. You may go."

The eyes of the two men met as the door closed behind her. The doctor was the first to speak.

"Now, see here, John, this is all gammon. The maid Marie probably forgot to deliver your wife's message. I wouldn't think any more about it if I were you."

The doctor removed his spectacles and slowly polished them as he gazed thoughtfully into the fire.

He had known John Harding intimately for years, and his faithful care of John's parents during their last illnesses had effectually cemented the friendship between the two men. John had invariably sought his advice in the small perplexities or serious worries of his life; those, at least, which did not concern his relation with his wife.

John's marriage had been a source of much concern to Doctor Bowyer. He had, from the first, believed that Isabelle lacked certain qualities essential to the ultimate harmony and happiness of John's married life. For months past the suspicion had grown upon him that all was not well with the two. He had noted an increasing sadness in John's expression, but he was powerless to help his friend until John should break down the defenses of his reserve.

Doctor Bowyer had no idea what Isabelle's intention had been when she started on her mysterious journey that morning, but, from idle bits of gossip which had reached him from time to time—and which returned to him now with gathered force—he feared that

there might be more behind the matter than he would care to have John suspect.

"When may I see her, doctor?" John asked anxiously.

"Presently, presently. You may not remain, however. She must have absolute rest and quiet, and I warn you, John, not to make any references to past events until she has quite recovered."

"Certainly, I'll ask her no questions. It won't be necessary, for Isabelle will tell me everything as soon as she's able to."

"Well, come along," said the doctor, rising. "We'll go in and see how she is."

As they entered the room, Miss Atwood rose from her chair at the bedside and drew back the hangings at one of the windows. John's heart contracted at the sight of his wife's still figure. He grasped the footboard of the bed and leaned over it, with eyes full of anxious love.

His gaze wandered from her face to her left hand which lay across her breast, and he noticed at once that her wedding and engagement rings were not on her finger. A quick vision of her, supported by the policeman, came before him. Could the rings have been stolen? As if in answer to this question, came another thought, and he stepped quickly to the dressing table. He rummaged clumsily for a moment and then, through the glass sides of a little box, he spied the rings. The nurse must have removed them, he thought, when she had prepared Isabelle for bed. The idea of her not wearing his rings was painful to him. He walked softly to the bed and slipped them on her finger.

As he drew back, a faint color flushed her cheeks, and her eyelids quivered almost imperceptibly. She sighed so faintly that the sound scarcely reached his attentive ears, and her head, under the cold cloths which enveloped her forehead, moved slightly on the pillow.

Doctor Bowyer had taken the nurse's chair and held his fingers on Isabelle's pulse. At these signs of returning consciousness he glanced at John with a smile. Presently he arose and spoke in an undertone with Miss Atwood. Then:

"Come," he whispered, as he laid his hand on John's shoulder. "She's doing famously. No need for worry now." And silently they left the room.

When they were gone, Miss Atwood drew the curtains together and resumed her seat by the bed. She removed the compress, wrung it out in a basin of iced water and replaced it. Slowly Isabelle's eyelids lifted and a pair of deep-blue eyes regarded her with a look of mute inquiry.

"It's all right, Mrs. Harding. Close your eyes and try to rest a little. Does your head ache badly?"

A negative movement of the head, and the eyelids closed. Presently they opened again and the lips moved in a faint whisper.

"Where am I?"

"At home, Mrs. Harding." The nurse gently rearranged the compress.

"What happened to me?" Isabelle's voice was very weak and unsteady.

Miss Atwood stroked her hand soothingly. "You met with an accident, but you are all right now. You must not try to talk. Just close your eyes and rest."

She obeyed, and soon her deepened breathing showed that she slept. For an hour she slept; then she stirred and opened her eyes. Her gaze wandered about the room, and finally rested on Miss Atwood with an expression of bewilderment.

The nurse rose quickly to her feet and bent over the bed.

"How are you feeling now, Mrs. Harding?"

"My head aches frightfully." Then, after a moment's hesitation, she asked wistfully: "Will you not tell me where I am and what happened to me?"

A look of deep concern came over

Miss Atwood's kind face. She related briefly what she had already told her patient, but a perplexed frown still puckered the white brows.

"I remember," she said slowly. "There was an awful crash and——" She passed her hand over her eyes. After a short silence, she spoke again.

"I'm awfully stupid, I know, but I don't understand. I can't think clearly. You called me Mrs. Harding."

"There, there!" Miss Atwood's voice was soothing. "You must not excite yourself. It will all come back to you when you are stronger. Just rest while I get you a cup of bouillon!"

The inquiring eyes closed again obediently. The hot bouillon brought a faint color into her cheeks and her pulse showed marked improvement. Her mind, however, was not at rest, and Miss Atwood observed her regarding the rings on her left hand with a curiously intent expression.

"May I not talk a little?" she inquired finally. "I'm sure it won't hurt me. I feel ever so much stronger."

"If you will promise not to get excited."

To Miss Atwood's experienced eye it was evident that her patient was in a very confused mental condition, and it seemed wise to allow her to ask a few questions which might have the effect of quieting her.

"No, I won't excite myself, but, Miss——" She hesitated.

"Atwood," the nurse supplied.

"Miss Atwood, I wish you would tell me how it all happened. I remember that I was going to some place, but I can't remember where. Can you tell me anything about it?"

"I'm very sorry, Mrs. Harding, but I cannot give you much information. When I arrived with Doctor Bowyer, your husband was here with you. All I know is that you were hurt when the taxicab in which you were riding collided with a trolley car."

"But my—my husband was not with me when I was hurt. I'm sure I was alone."

"Your husband was on his way up Fifth Avenue, and was one of the first to reach the scene of the accident."

"Oh, it's all so strange!" She pressed her slender hands tight against her eyes, then dropped them with a gesture of despair. "It's no use," she said wearily. "I can't remember."

"Don't try to remember now. It will all come back to you when you are better." The nurse lighted a small night lamp, for the short day was almost at an end.

At half past six, the doctor returned, accompanied by John. He could not conceal his satisfaction as he noted the improvement which had taken place. John stood in the shadows, his eyes fixed on his wife with a look of unspeakable yearning.

"Come over here, John, and see how well our patient looks."

He stepped swiftly to the doctor's side and bent over the bed. He took one of her hands in both of his, and their eyes met. In his was a depth of sympathy and love; hers were wide open and filled with perplexity. It was an expression which struck John with dismay.

"Don't you know me, Isabelle?" His voice shook.

"I can't seem to remember." The words came slowly and then, without warning, she burst into hysterical sobs. He was on his knees in an instant, trying ineffectually to quiet her. Doctor Bowyer drew him to his feet.

"Come, John," he said. "We must leave her to Miss Atwood. Wait for me in the library. I'll join you presently."

John stumbled out of the room; all the joy he had experienced to find her conscious, had gone. What it all meant he could not fathom, and the interval which passed, before Doctor Bowyer joined him, seemed hours instead of

minutes. The light from the lamp threw his shadow on the wall, black, immense, grotesque; and his thoughts assumed the same abnormal proportions.

"She has lost her reason," John said heavily, when Doctor Bowyer entered.

The doctor's expression was serious. He approached the fireplace, then turned and faced John, who stood watching him intently.

"Now hold on, my boy; don't let's jump at conclusions."

"Well, you heard what she said? She didn't know me."

"Yes, I know; it's unusual, but such cases have occurred before. Her brain has received a very severe concussion. For the present the balance is destroyed."

It seemed inexpedient to acquaint the anxious husband with all the possibilities, for he was already thoroughly unstrung and would be inclined to misinterpret any prognosis as to the probable ultimate effects of the injury.

From previous experience, and from the reports of certain alienists, Doctor Bowyer knew that it could not be predicted when or how his patient's brain would resume its normal function.

He had some doubt, following his last examination, coupled with what Miss Atwood had reported to him, whether Isabelle recollected anything of her past life, except the moment which preceded the accident. This seemed indelibly impressed on her mind. He fully expected that sooner or later something would happen to restore her memory. But, even should full consciousness of her past life return, would not the period from the time of the accident to the moment of her awakening remain a blank? Did not her present condition resemble a state of somnambulism, a semiconscious state, in which only a portion of her brain responded, while the greater part of it slept? Isabelle would not alter externally, but, with a new and abnormal adjustment of her brain

cells, what would be the effect on her character and disposition? To be sure, they might remain unaltered, but he recalled cases where very material changes had taken place; where a Jekyll had been transformed into a Hyde, and vice versa.

Doctor Bowyer's impassive face gave no clew to his thoughts and John's next question found him prepared.

"Will she ever be any better?" John's voice was hoarse with emotion. "Will she always be as she is at present?"

"Certainly not." The answer had the ring of finality. "There is no destruction of brain substance, simply a functional disturbance—in all probability of a hysterical nature—and it will surely pass. But," he added, "it will take time. You must control yourself, John; just take things for granted; do not appear to notice anything unusual in her manner or remarks, and with time and care we'll bring her around."

"Thank God for that!" John's voice was strong with hopeful confidence, but in his eyes, as they met the doctor's searching gaze, there was a silent contradiction to the cheerful optimism of his voice and words.

IV.

The moment of Isabelle's return to consciousness changed the nightmare of John's fears into instant and painful reality.

Doctor Bowyer advised absolute quiet and bed for three or four days, and Miss Atwood remained with Isabelle for that short period. John spent the first of these intermediate days at home, too restless and preoccupied even to read. Isabelle greeted him that morning with a smile whose sweetness was tinged with a vague wistfulness which haunted him for days. In the afternoon he sat with her for half an hour and talked of various impersonal matters, while she lay quietly watching him, her great eyes full of a dumb questioning. The doc-

tor had cautioned him against making any attempt for the present to stir her dormant memory. That same evening he advised John to go to his office the following day, with a kindly and judicious insistence that John was not needed in the house and that concentration on work would relieve the tension of his brain.

The second day he found her raised on her pillows. Her hair was parted and two thick braids formed a frame of gold for the pale oval of her face, and lay on the soft whiteness of her neck, following downward the lovely curves of her bared arms.

John had never seen her with hair parted, and it struck him with surprise that her forehead had a breadth of line which he had never before observed. Isabelle was one of those rare and fortunate women who can wear their hair at any angle with equally happy results, but, in whatever manner it was dressed, it had invariably been arranged so that soft waves and tendrils partially hid her forehead. It had a charming way of falling over her eyes now, and he felt as if he had never really seen her brow before. This touch of austerity had added something of intellectual refinement and nobility to her face.

Isabelle seemed little inclined to talk. Her strong young body had, as the doctor assured John, recovered entirely from the shock of her fall, but she became quickly fatigued mentally and, when not actually sleeping, she lay for the most part with her eyes closed, or, when open, fixed in thoughtful abstraction on the treetops and the bit of sky visible through the windows. The second afternoon John asked Miss Atwood if he might read to his wife, and the nurse told him that it would be better for her than conversation. At the mention of a book, Isabelle's face seemed suddenly to grow more alive. When he asked her what she would like him to read, a puzzled, troubled look came

into her eyes; she frowned a little and then her face cleared and she asked if he would read something of Shelley's.

John's face was a study at that moment; perplexity, then a curious little thrill of pleasure, then one of his quick smiles, half humorous, half sad, as he went to his room for a copy of Shelley. This was the old Isabelle, only a bit more subtle. His conversation had not interested her, so she had welcomed the suggestion of reading aloud. She was too kind to ask him to read one of the novels she knew he detested, and she had suggested poetry because it would be soothing, and Shelley, specifically, because she had remembered his love for that poet. At that point, John stood still, with the small volume in his hand, and his fingers tightened their clasp. If she remembered that, she would recall other things little by little.

At the end of three-quarters of an hour Miss Atwood signified that he had read long enough. He looked up, expecting to see Isabelle sound asleep, but her eyes were wide open, watching him intently, an expression in their blue depths which he did not know and could not understand.

"Thank you for reading to me, John. I've enjoyed it so much!"

The smile which curved her lips seemed to John's bewildered senses absolutely genuine and unmarred by any slightest touch of that irony which he used so often to awaken in her. The incident seemed, as he later looked back upon it, to mark a new era in his relationship with his wife.

Two weeks after the accident, Miss Atwood departed, Isabelle having sufficiently recovered to be left to the ministrations of the new lady's maid who had been secured during her illness—a German-Swiss, who answered to the name of Rose. Before introducing Rose to her new mistress, John had told his wife of his efforts to replace Marie by a maid whom she would like, and

had added that he feared she would not like Rose as well as Marie, but he made no other reference to the French girl. Far less did he question his wife as to the reason for Marie's abrupt departure. She had accepted the installment of the new maid with the same sweet composure which had characterized her manner toward every one during her convalescence.

Miss Atwood's comment on the new lady's maid had struck Harding as descriptive. She had said:

"Rose has not been taken out of a novel, that's evident, Mrs. Harding, and I can't picture her dressing your hair, but I'm sure she's painfully clean and honest, and will only see and understand the clearly obvious—which must be a comfort in such a person."

John thought of Marie's subtleties and uncanny powers of observation, and realized the full meaning of the comfort to which Miss Atwood referred.

One morning, a week after Miss Atwood's departure—it was Sunday—Isabelle sat at her writing table. For several minutes she had sat motionless, except for a nervous turning of her wedding and engagement rings around her finger. Every few seconds, without raising her head, her eyes would seek the window; then back they would wander to the two bands of gold and the diamond on her left hand. Gradually, the look of pained perplexity seemed to crystallize into one of definite hope and purpose. She smiled as if at some secret memory, and suddenly she bent her head and pressed her lips to the two rings.

A firm tap sounded on her door, and in answer to her cheerful "Come in," John entered the room.

As he bent his dark head over her fair one, he kissed her very gently on the lips. A faint color came into her rather pale cheeks, but there was not the slightest shrinking from the caress, and her eyes looked straight into his with a regard of frank trust and comradeship.

John realized fully that it was the first time since the accident that no recoil had met his demonstrations of affection. Each time he had kissed her, a fluttering or lowering of the lids, a trembling of the lips, a barely perceptible turning of the head, had started a throb of the dull ache in his heart. It seemed to have nothing akin to the old aloofness and coolness which had so pained him for months before his midnight visit to her room. It was more like the delicate shrinking of a girl—a girl neither unloving nor unresponsive—who draws shyly back at the unfamiliar physical approach of love.

The exquisite abandon of which some feminine natures are capable, when their depths have been touched by love, John did not understand. It was a joy he had never tasted. His excursions into the amorous byways of life had been brief and infrequent, beginning with a harmless flirtation in his preparatory-school days with a girl of his own class, and ending with an affair—not quite so harmless—with a young widow, older than himself and of obscure social position. Neither affair had left any mark on his strong nature, but the last one at least had inspired in him a distaste for the frivolities of love which, he knew, amuse so many men.

His love for Isabelle had been the first real and vital thing of the kind in his life; it was to him a symbol of all that was perfect and ideal in love. This faith, in conjunction with an ignorance and innocence of mind rare in a young man of twenty-eight, made it easy for him to accept his wife's philosophy regarding the tender passion, the philosophy of a girl of twenty, which relegated all capacity for passionate abandon to the unfortunate women of the world whose emotions are not properly kept in check. John could not recall that Isabelle, even during their engagement, had ever been particularly shy or cold, but she had never warmed beyond a certain

limit, which was temperamental and not spiritual, had he but understood.

This newborn shyness of hers had held in it almost the promise of inexpressible tenderness, but it had troubled him none the less, because he saw in it what seemed to him an indication of a sense of unfamiliarity with him and his presence near her.

"Are you very busy, dear?" he asked her.

"Yes, John, and I should be so grateful if you could give me a little of your time. I am afraid I need your help with these." She fingered some of the cards of invitation on her desk and looked at him with an appealing smile.

He drew a chair near hers.

"I'll give you all the time I can and help you want, dear girl. What's the difficulty?"

"Well——" She hesitated. "John," she began again in a firmer voice, "my memory for names was never good, I fear, and since my accident I seem to have grown worse in that particular." Her mouth trembled ever so little and John winced.

"What names are troubling you, little girl?"

She gathered up several stray notes and handed them to him.

"I seem to have confused some of these people in my mind. It is not that I have forgotten the people themselves," she added hastily, as she noticed the worried frown between his eyes. "I never forget *people*, but I want you to help me get the names and the people who belong to them, together, in my mind's eye," she ended whimsically.

Doctor Bowyer had warned him to expect forgetfulness of details in her past life, and cautioned him that he must never let her imagine how much such occasions distressed him. That she more than suspected it, Isabelle, in her turn, concealed carefully from her husband.

He quickly decided that to save her and himself any needless pain or em-

barrassment, he would take for granted that it was quite natural she should have forgotten the names and even the appearance of some of her friends; he would describe fully and patiently to her each person whose name appeared in her letters or her visiting book. While he talked and described their friends and acquaintances, she made memoranda in a small book, and, after certain of these, she put a star. After he had read seven notes and described a dozen or more persons, he told her that that would do for the present, because she must not tire her brain.

The last note John read was a dinner invitation from Mrs. Bertie de Koven, Isabelle's most intimate friend. John had never particularly admired Nancy because he thought her rather shallow, but the husband was a college friend and a fine fellow, and although John had often regretted that his wife should not select a woman of more mind and character than Nancy de Koven for her particular friend, his loyalty to Bertie prevented even the expression to Isabelle of such a sentiment.

"This evidently arrived the day before"—he faltered—"before your accident. I suppose you hardly had time to send any reply?" His question was a tentative one.

"I suppose not," she answered.

She picked up a small sheet of scented and monogrammed paper.

"Here is a note from Mrs.—from Nancy"—she caught herself up quickly—"which must have come a few days ago."

He took the note, which ran:

DEAREST BELLA: I shall count on you and John for my dinner on the twenty-sixth, unless I hear to the contrary before Monday. Poor darling! What a time you have had and how lonely you must have been with only a trained nurse for company, and John for your only visitor! You must be nearly dead of ennui. I have called several times, but they would not let me see you even for a minute. John has you all to himself for

once. How happy he must be! Or perhaps, he doesn't know how to adapt himself to the unaccustomed joy of it. Well, it can't last much longer, so cheer up, dear, and don't you dare let John and dear old Doctor Bowyer keep you away from my dinner.

I haven't laid eyes on Tom Carewe for ten days—since the night he brought you to the Griswolds' theatricals—and Bertie says he hasn't seen him at any of the clubs. He must, indeed, be inconsolable, to fade away so completely.

Well, here's to you, and better luck next time. Your devoted,
NANCY.

As he finished reading this characteristic letter, he looked up and met his wife's questioning gaze in which there was not a trace of self-consciousness or embarrassment.

He studied her a moment.

"Have you been very lonely and bored, Isabelle?"

She bent impulsively toward him.

"No, indeed, I haven't, John. Why do you ask that?"

"Well, Nancy de Koven seems to take for granted that you have been."

"Oh!" She turned her face toward the window. "Nancy de Koven"—she pronounced the name slowly and thoughtfully—"does not quite understand."

He felt that the answer was evasive, but when she turned on him again her wide eyes, their clear depths seemed to hold no hidden meaning.

"I'm glad you haven't been bored with me, dear." There was the echo of a question in his voice.

"I'm never bored with you," she answered quietly.

The latent humor of the remark suddenly struck him and brought a twisted smile to his lips; then, once again, all these darting thoughts and suspicions were held at bay by the serene and open gaze of her blue eyes.

Ah, well, all prying analysis into motives and meanings availed nothing and, above all, he must learn to take his wife just as the moment found her!

"Do you wish me to accept the invi-

tation?" she asked. "Or shall I not be well enough to go?"

Never doubting her desire to take up as soon as possible the gayly colored threads of her social existence, he replied:

"Wait till I ask Doctor Bowyer when he comes this afternoon, but I'm pretty sure he will say that in ten days from now you will be quite well enough to go. I'll call up Nancy de Koven tonight and tell her whether or not to expect us."

"And, John——" She stopped uncertainly.

"Yes, dear?"

"When you telephone—Nancy—will you ask her how many and who the guests are to be?"

"Yes, I will. I'm rather curious to know myself who is to be there."

The intention had formed itself in his mind, before Isabelle's request, to get a list of Mrs. de Koven's guests, with the loving purpose of protecting his wife from any conceivable embarrassment.

John rose.

"I have some letters to write. Will you be ready for our drive at two?"

"Yes," she answered brightly, "and I shall be down to take luncheon with you."

"That will be fine!"

Isabelle sat very still, her eyes fixed on the door which had closed behind him. She got up abruptly and began a restless pacing of the room. One issue confronted her and she faced and accepted it bravely. She realized that, in spite of her most determined efforts to recall anything which had transpired before the accident, her mind remained a blank. With the exception of the crash, of which she had spoken to Miss Atwood, she could remember absolutely nothing.

She knew herself to be the dearly loved wife of a strong and tender man, but the appalling fact remained that she had no previous memory of this man

nor of her relations with him. No person nor event of her past life remained to her, although she had a vivid remembrance of books she had read, pictures she had seen, strains of music she had heard, each one a single detached fragment which bore no relation to the others, was without setting or background, and seemed to form no part of the fabric of her past consciousness.

But, John, dear, kind, devoted John, must never know—must never even suspect! He realized her lapse of memory in many directions, but at no matter what cost to herself, she must preserve him from the knowledge that the lapse was infinitely more comprehensive than he at present dreamed.

She stood still, her hands clasped tightly in front of her, her eyes brilliant with the high purpose of her soul.

She would never relax her vigilance over her speech and manner, and she would meet every new and baffling complication or circumstance with a courage born of love—for, that she loved this husband of hers was the one fact of her present existence which she accepted as unquestioningly as she did this love for her.

V.

The week that ensued was to John a sort of magic music box, which gave forth for his special delectation new melodies and harmonies as unexpected as they were delightful. His life seemed to set itself to a new rhythm and he wondered, as each day dawned, what novel surprise it might hold for him.

Monday morning Isabelle appeared at the breakfast table. John's pleasure was undisguised, but he made no reference to her usual habit of breakfasting in bed.

She had more color than during the preceding days, but was, nevertheless, paler than he remembered ever to have seen her. She wore a pale-blue *crêpe*,

de Chine negligee, with quantities of filmy lace on it. John observed with pleasure that she wore no *boudoir cap*, though she had several as accessories to her varied wardrobe. It was characteristic of him that he had a masculine dislike for the smaller feminine vanities and fads which, he thought, added nothing to a woman's beauty or charm. Her hair was parted in the style inaugurated by Miss Atwood, and fell in soft waves to the tips of her small ears.

"What are you going to do, dear, this perfect morning?" he asked, as they left the breakfast room. "Do you want James to take you shopping or anywhere?"

"No, John," she answered cheerfully, "I haven't any shopping to do."

"Good gracious!" he laughed. "What's going to happen when you have no shopping to do?"

"Well," she said, standing at the foot of the stairs, with her hand on the newel post, and smiling at him. "You see, I have so many clothes and things, I really don't need anything just at present."

He approached her to say good-by.

"Doctor Bowyer thinks it best, dearest, that you should see no visitors at present. He wishes to keep you from all excitement until next week."

Her expression of relief did not escape him.

"Very well. I'll tell Simpson to say that I can receive no one for a few days, by the doctor's orders."

"Oh, and by the way, Isabelle, you had better write to Nancy de Koven and tell her you can't even see her or she'll come here and go away terribly huffed."

"Oh, John, can't you telephone to her from your office? Ah, do, there's a good fellow!"

She put her hand on his arm. It was the first voluntary demonstration she had made for longer than he cared to recall. He put his arm about her and bent and kissed her.

"Of course I'll telephone to her, little girl. I'll tell her I'm a regular ogre and that you refused to tell her not to come, so I had to do it myself."

"Yes, yes, that will be fine! I'm sure I shall feel more like meeting people by next week," she added plaintively.

When John returned in the late afternoon, he found his wife in the big drawing-room, seated at the piano. The curtains were drawn and the only light came from the blazing logs on the hearth.

Isabelle was playing one of Chopin's preludes, her eyes closed and her fingers, now and again, repeating a bar in a dreamy, groping fashion, as if seeking some elusive chord.

"I'm glad," he said as he kissed her, "that you are coming back to the music which really counts, dear. You used to tell me that as a schoolgirl in Paris you never played light music. But New York society gets one into the bad habit of ragtime, doesn't it? It's about all they care for."

Isabelle frowned a little. She bit her lip as she caught herself on the point of saying that she knew no ragtime or could not remember any.

"I love Chopin, don't you, John?" she asked eagerly. "He seems to run the gamut of human emotions and he satisfies the intellect as well."

John quickly lowered his lids over what he felt must be the startled look of wonder in his eyes.

"Yes, dear, Chopin is wonderful!" Then, because dissimulation did not come easily to him, he said abruptly: "Any tea left, or am I too late?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon, John." She stepped to the tea table. "I can make fresh tea if you care to wait, but I've just had mine and the muffins are still hot. I'll take another cup with you."

"Good! There's nothing more lonely than a solitary cup of tea."

"I should think it preferable to a lonely high ball, and some men don't

mind that, do they?" she asked, smiling.

"High balls aren't often lonely; they usually have company. It's the conviviality of whisky and soda that makes it so hard for a man to get away from his club perfectly clear-headed."

Isabelle was silent a moment, and then she said:

"Wouldn't you rather stop at your club sometimes, than come home every afternoon to me?"

A quick succession of pictures rose before him of the many afternoons when he had drifted to his club because he longed for companionship and knew that he would not find his wife at home, or that, if he did, she would be surrounded by women and usually men he did not like. "I would rather come home to you, dear, than go anywhere else in the world!"

Every afternoon he took her for a ride in the car and afterward they would have tea at home—hours of companionship and joy. It seemed to him that her sense of humor, though it had always been keener than most women's, was more delicately balanced than he had ever realized.

Often she would play to him charming bits from McDowell or Chaminade; dainty snatches from Grieg or Nevin; exquisite melodies from Weber, Schumann, or Schubert; weird, haunting harmonies from Saint-Saens or Maurice Ravel; and, now and again, she would plunge into the deeper intricacies of Bach, Brahms, or Beethoven.

She played with a depth of feeling, a variety of color, and an aesthetic perception at which John marveled. He knew that in her girlhood great things had been predicted for her. But the years had not yielded their promise. Her temperamental disinclination to any extraordinary effort had gradually grown upon her until she had ceased to make even a pretense of serious work and had drifted into the modern per-

nicious habit of ragtime or comic opera for the entertainment of friends who cared for no other form of piano music.

Very recently Doctor Bowyer had spoken of possible modifications of character induced by such an accident as Isabelle's, but John felt that his wife was simply reverting to what he had all along believed, in his inmost soul, was her real self. Often he wondered if their talk that memorable night might not have influenced her to an effort to develop along the lines he had so often indicated to her. He longed to ask her if she remembered that night and their conversation, but as yet he had not dared to do so.

Every evening they read together in his library, and what she seemed to be interested in was another living sign to him of the subtle change in her—Hardy and Meredith, Flaubert, Balzac, or Loti, Valdez, or Tolstoy. The Spanish and French books were in the original and John found it a delight to hear Isabelle read aloud from Balzac or Maeterlinck.

One evening he read to her a short story by the woman who, of all our American writers, as John declared, has attained the most finished perfection of style. It was a horrible, ghastly tale of forbidden love and expiation, told with a truth and vividness beyond compare, but the hopelessness of it was withering and absolutely unredeemed by any spiritual uplift. "Oh, John, I can't bear it! I can't bear it!" she finally burst out. "Why must people write such things? And if such awful misery exists, without a ray of hope, human or spiritual, what is the use of it all, oh, what is the use?" And she broke into sobs.

As he gathered Isabelle, weeping, into his arms, he felt that he could forgive the author only because this incident had brought him very near to his wife; it had given him another revelation of her character.

It must not be supposed that this week of sweet surprises and gentle mysteries

held for John no moments of alloyed joy. The old puzzle would often recur to him: where had Isabelle been going? Why was she going? And always, in the background of these troublous queries, stood the silent, baffling figure of Marie, the maid.

In his eagerness to please her, John often offered concessions of taste or opinion only to find that the thing he expected her to want was precisely the thing she abjured. This took him constantly by surprise. One night he announced that he had secured seats for the première of a musical comedy.

She looked at him rather blankly.

"Do you like that sort of thing, John?" she asked him with a puzzled frown.

"I—why—no, I don't, but I thought you——" He stopped abruptly.

"I think," she said, smiling, "that musical comedy is the lowest form of animal life. It's neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring. The music is a desecration, and the lines aren't even amusing."

He stared at her, amazed.

"Well—how about a good comedy?"

She smiled again.

"Is there such a thing in New York to-day? Deliver me from a so-called funny play! I love a good laugh—who doesn't?—but to sit for two hours, feeling no other emotion than a painful effort to find something to laugh at, is rather of a bore."

He laughed and said:

"It's very odd! You know, you always used to hate a serious play."

She did not smile back at him.

"Did I? Well, I must have been undergoing a change in my tastes, all unknown to you, John."

It ended by their going to a drama whose note of appealing sadness centered around a child. Isabelle made frank use of her handkerchief. She leaned toward John and slipped her hand into his and whispered: "I can't

dear parts concerning a child. They touch me more deeply than anything else."

John received from this remark the impression which was constantly being renewed by little acts and words of hers—that she was a different woman from the one to whom he had gone that night and with whom he had pleaded as for his life. She had been too womanly ever to be careless of or unkind to any child who crossed her path, but she had always struck him as rather indifferent to children and bored by a too close or prolonged proximity to them.

As the play proceeded, his attention wandered, for a new thought came to illumine this present mood of Isabelle's. He understood now, he told himself, that the change which had apparently taken place in her nature, subsequent to the accident, was not the sole explanation for this new tenderness which had swept over her. Often, during the past weeks, he had dwelt in secret on the wonderful revelation she had made to him a little over two months ago. But Isabelle had appeared to wish to ignore that particular phase of her life as completely as if it did not exist.

Doctor Bowyer had come to see her frequently, but there was never any probing on his part into this phase of the situation. He was able to judge of her physical condition only from surface indications and from such questions as he put casually to her. Once John had said to him:

"She has never since her accident—in fact, to be exact, not once, since her first confession to me—referred in any way to this question. Is that quite normal, doctor?"

Doctor Bowyer had answered with one of his slow, kind smiles:

"John, how can we ever say what is or what is not *normal* in any of us, and Heaven preserve us from even attempting such a thing when it's a question of why a *woman* does this or that."

"But," John had persisted, "Isabelle has never been particularly shy or reserved—until lately," he had added reflectively.

"Well, that's just it; she has never been—a good many things—until lately. Its all out of the same piece of cloth."

"At least, doctor," John asked, "you find her perfectly well and normal in other respects?"

"Absolutely so." Doctor Bowyer's assertion was emphatic. "She eats and sleeps well; she certainly *looks* well, and you say that she has so far developed no queer fancies or cravings, and that she is consistently cheerful and happy. What more, dear fellow, can you ask for?"

"Nothing," John answered.

Thus the conversation had ended between the two men, and the subject had not since been reopened.

As he sat in his orchestra chair, holding Isabelle's slender hand in his, he rehearsed in memory his scene with Doctor Bowyer.

He lingered over his good night in her room.

"Sweetheart," he whispered, "tell me—I *must* ask you, I *must* know! Do you remember the things I said to you that night in your bedroom, the night before your accident, and my insistence that it was not too late for us to develop a closer sympathy and understanding?"

As he studied her face in the semi-darkness, the expression of her eyes was hidden from him, and all he saw was the slow, sweet smile which curved her lips.

"Of course, John, I remember most of the conversation—the important things, you know. It was something I could not easily forget, dear."

Some strange, but sure intuition had inspired the closing phrase. She had followed a blind impulse not only to let him think she remembered, but also to make her avowal the more convincing.

by lightly referring to the serious nature of the interview.

She rejoiced to feel that she had counteracted, temporarily at least, the effect of her lapses of memory regarding other matters. But, when she was alone in her room, she told herself that sooner or later—probably sooner—John would divine the whole truth as to her mental

condition. She felt that ultimate and crushing fact closing slowly down upon her, and she went to sleep filled with so strong a dread of the approaching dinner at Mrs. de Koven's, that her dreams were twisted visions of persons she strove vainly to address and could not, because her tongue would form no name.

TO BE CONTINUED.



BALLADE OF THE MYSTERY OF WOMAN

A WOMAN! Lightly the mysterious word
 Falls from our lips, as we its meaning knew!
 Lightly, as one should say—a flower, a bird;
 Or say—the moon, the stream, the light, the dew;
 Simple, familiar things, mysterious, too;
 Or as a star is written on a chart,
 Named with a name, out yonder in the blue:
 A woman—and yet how much more thou art!

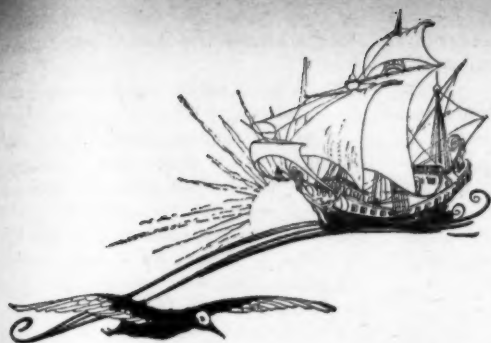
So lightly spoken, and so lightly heard;
 And yet, strange word, who shall thy sense construe?
 What sage hath yet fit definition dared?
 Yea! I have sought the dictionaries through,
 And of thy meaning found me not a clew.
 Blessing and breaking still the firmest heart,
 So fairy false, yet so divinely true:
 A woman—and yet how much more thou art!

Mother of God and Circe, bosom-bared,
 That nursed our manhood and our manhood slew;
 First dream, last sigh, all the long way we fared;
 Sweet as wild honey, bitterer than rue;
 Thou fated radiance sorrowing men pursue,
 Thou art the whole of life—the rest but part
 Of thee, of all the things we dream and do:
 A woman—and yet how much more thou art!

ENVOI:

Princess, that all this craft of moonlight threw
 Across my path, this deep, immortal smart
 Shall still burn on when winds my ashes strew:
 A woman—and yet how much more thou art!

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE.



The Prior Claim

By Solita Solano

Author of "A Star Is Born,"
"Expurgated," etc.

JUANA slipped off her *chinelas* and stole, barefooted, through the sala toward the room where her Americano was sleeping. Petito, aged seven, wanted to see where his mother was going. He left his coconut-shell toy in a corner of the kitchen and pattered noisily after her. Coming upon the *chinelas* in the doorway, he stopped to thrust his little feet into them. They were surprisingly large.

"Nonay, kita!" ("Mamma, look!") he shouted out in glee. This awoke Blanca, so named in the hope she would be light of skin. She turned over on her stomach and rolled off the petate.

"Nonay!" she cried in fright.

Juana looked around at the bursting little face. She felt relief from her apprehension and pain in a rush of maternal tenderness.

"S-s-s-s-s!" she hissed softly.

She went back to the kitchen and picked up the baby. Presently she installed both children in the patio on a mat and gave each a bit of sugar cane.

"Be quiet, little ones. Thy father is not yet awake," she whispered. The children, sucking their sugar cane, nodded solemnly. Their round blue eyes, oddly at variance with their coffee-colored skin, followed their mother through the doorway.

Juana squatted on her heels outside the American's room. She would wait

there until he called for his chocolate. Perhaps she would dare to speak to him about this terrible thing. She scarcely needed to ask him if it were true—had she not heard it from her disapproving family, to whom the news had already traveled in Palo, seven miles away? Was it not already a scandal in the *tiendas*, on the water front, and whispered among the women as they came from mass? And had she not seen it in his face for the past two weeks, as he brushed past her as if she were a servant?

Juana had a great desire to look upon the American girl who had come a month since to the island of Leyte from chimerical lands across the sea. She had heard that the Americana's skin was like the milk of the *carabao*, her eyes like the midday sky, and her hair like sunlight. She must look even as the Virgin, thought Juana, devoted to her church, in spite of everything. Her man must not see this Americana any more. She would remind him of their children and of her eight years' devotion as mother and housewife. He had often praised her industry and economy while speaking scornfully of his countrywomen, who, as soon as the, arrived in Tacloban, hired five or six houseboys, a Chinese cook, and a sewing woman—then spent their time lying about reading books. They even poked

their husbands out of their way while they flirted and went driving with other men. And now her Americano was in love with one of them!

She moaned softly. Her heart was beating in great thumps of misery.

"*Juana! Hi-in ka!*" The voice behind the door was vibrant with life and energy.

"*Dinhe,*" answered Juana. She sprang up and brushed her eyes with the sleeve of her camisa.

"Well, where is my chocolate?" demanded the voice in Visayan, the only tongue Juana understood—except a few words of Spanish used on the formal occasions when Filipinos did not think it fitting to speak their own language to each other because it was despised by the Spaniards, their masters for four centuries.

Juana ran to get the chocolate from her ridiculous little stove, and carried it into the bedroom. Edward Hopkins Watts, until nine years before a conventional resident of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U. S. A., pushed aside the mosquito netting, sat up in bed, and accepted the cup from Juana, without looking at her.

Not yet thirty, Edward had come to the Philippines nine years before to sell a firm in Manila something it didn't want. The islands fascinated him. He decided to stay. After trying three or four occupations unsuccessfully the first year, he had drifted to Tacloban and opened a contracting business. This, in spite of his knowing nothing about it at first, had prospered, thanks to his energy and resourcefulness.

Strength showed in his lean jaw and strong chin. Only his eyes, a Celtic blue, showed a latent tendency to dream. The climate, so fatal to foreigners, had not yet put its enervating mark on this descendant of sturdy Scotch and Irish forbears. He despised those white men who sat safe from the sun, murmuring that it was too hot to work that day.

"What time is it?" he asked with a yawn that showed thirty-two perfect teeth.

"It is late—nearly eight o'clock," replied Juana.

"I must hurry my bath, then," said Edward. "Why didn't you wake me? In an hour I meet a man who wants a sea wall built on his property." He sprang to the floor and reached for his *chinelas*. Still he did not look at her.

Juana ran to make sure the barrel in the bathroom had been filled by the muchacho with rain water from the tank. She found the coconut shell from which water is poured over the head—the method of bathing in these primitive places—and placed it near the barrel on the bamboo floor.

Edward, in his Japanese kimono, presently passed through the kitchen. Seeing him unaware of her presence, Juana's resolve to speak to him weakened. She went to the patio and hushed the children mechanically when they shouted their desire to see "*tatay*." With a hand on each soft head, Juana remembered how tender the big man had been when they were born, and how solicitous for her health afterward, although she had assured him proudly that she was as strong as ever and not like some weaklings she had heard of—she meant white women—who had to rest, it was said, a whole week after such a simple and natural occurrence.

While Edward was dressing, Juana tortured herself by standing outside his door, noting the care with which he shaved and dressed. These days he fastened his white socks with garters, so that they no longer hung about his ankles. He also wore under the high collar of his white coat another collar, starched and uncomfortable, of the sort worn only when there was a municipal function to attend, or a wife to please, whose head was filled with American conventions. As Edward was finding a becoming angle for the fine straw hat

which he usually kept for fiestas, he looked up and saw the brown woman watching him.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" he demanded. "Go to the children. I hear them crying." Juana, too, could hear them now. She wondered why she hadn't noticed before.

She walked away, but before she reached the patio, she heard a knock. The muchacho had not yet returned from the market, so Juana opened the door. It was the priest, Padre Francisco Gordillo, a fat little man known all over the island for his many good deeds.

"*Myopie nga aga, Juana.* You are well, my child?"

"Yes, my father. I am honored to see you. Pray enter."

The Filipino removed his wide, black hat and passed into the sala. He seated himself on the edge of a chair and folded his hands across his stomach. He smiled nervously.

"You will take something, father?"

"No, many thanks. Is you—your hus—" The good padre hesitated. "Is the Americano at home?" he finished.

At this moment, Edward walked out from his room with a brisk step.

"Good day, señor padre. I heard your voice. I hope you are well," he said in Spanish, which he spoke less well than Visayan. "Juana, give the señor padre some refreshment." He shook hands with the little brown man and turned to go.

"A moment, señor, if you will be so indulgent. It is you I came to see."

Edward stopped and waited. His face showed annoyance.

Juana left the room quickly.

"Señor, your Juana is like a daughter to me. She has come to my church every Sunday since she was able to hold a rosary. I cannot see her heart broken and remain silent. Everybody is talking. They say you are paying court

to an American girl. Surely you will see that this is impossible. I have come to ask you to do your duty to Juana and the children."

"What is my duty?" asked Edward coldly.

"I want you to marry her, señor," said the padre. "It is time."

"That is out of the question," snapped Edward.

"Why? Other white men have lived up to their obligations."

"I shall live up to mine, señor padre. Juana and the children will always be cared for. But I shall marry a woman of my own country. Good day, señor padre."

Edward's victoria and small yellow horses from Cebu were waiting for him in the street below. He ran down the stairs and, without greeting the *cochero*, stepped into the carriage with a brief, "*Sigue oficina.*" The carriage passed swiftly along, crossing the narrow river near the house and entering the white coral road, edged with coconut and banana trees, all the way to the plaza. Turning by the church and jail, always found together in these islands, it passed along Calle Real, Tacloban's principal business street. The *cochero*, wishing to please Edward, touched the ponies with his whip so that they reared and cantered smartly past the big shops and the offices of American, Chinese, Spanish, English, German, and Turkish business concerns. They turned around the corner of Calle Pelayo and the *cochero* pulled up the panting ponies at Edward's office.

Edward's customer had not yet arrived, said the clerk, but a muchacho had just brought a letter—from a lady. Edward snatched it from the young Filipino's hand and read:

DEAREST: Can you come to tiffin to-day instead of to-morrow? I must see you. My brother has just left for Tanauan. He has told me something dreadful about you. Of course, I don't believe it. LOUISE.

At one o'clock, Edward, outwardly calm, presented himself at the house of John Harkness, the American engineer who had arrived the month before to take charge of Leyte's roads and bridges. Valentin, the head houseboy, admitted Edward with a sly smile. Valentin was a cousin of Juana's, and had frequently visited Edward's house on terms of equality. Blood relations are, at their most, inescapable on islands. Valentin led Edward to the sala and lingered behind him in the doorway.

Louise Harkness, already bored with the monotony of her new life, was awaiting Edward. The girl was quivering with emotion and curiosity aroused by a man with whom she might not have concerned herself for a day back in the States. But here, thousands of miles from home, he seemed to her the most attractive and fascinating man she had ever known.

"I was afraid you wouldn't come!" cried Louise, leaving her chair and holding out her hands.

"Of course I came!" replied Edward formally. He stood still, embarrassed by the knowledge that Valentin was behind him.

"Oh, you're angry! Please don't be angry! I told you I didn't believe what John said!" exclaimed Louise hysterically.

Edward noticed then that she had been crying. He forgot Valentin and the world.

"My darling girl, I'm not worth one of your tears!" he said. "But if you think I am, will you overlook my unworthiness and marry me?"

Louise, wondering why he had not asked her before, tried to look surprised.

"First you must prove to my brother that what he heard wasn't true," she parried.

"I don't know what he heard," said Edward uneasily. "Don't let us talk of disagreeable things now. Just let me

look at you. You're like an angel in that billowy white dress, with your yellow hair making a halo around your head! My! I haven't seen a dress like that or hair like that for nearly ten years! You don't know how terrible it has been, living out in this wilderness, without seeing any American women except homely schoolteachers and missionaries. I feel like getting down on my knees to you every time I see you. I never should have dared to think you cared for me, if you hadn't put your hand into mine that evening we drove to Dulag.

"Since then I have thought of nothing but you, night and day! I see a new life ahead of me, back in God's country. My sweetheart, my little white angel, you have saved me from a living death! Thank you, thank you!" And Edward seized Louise's hands and kissed them fervently, without its occurring to him that he had been contented enough with his life until he had fallen in love.

Louise was delighted with this speech. She threw her arms around Edward's neck and crumpled the front of the white coat which Juana had ironed the day before with infinite care and many tears.

"Now I'll tell you what a nasty, gossiping man told John last night!" Louise began, as she pulled Edward down on the sofa by her side. "It isn't a nice thing to tell you—but, as we are to be married, I'll have to get used to telling you things, won't I?" And Louise snuggled up to Edward and looked adorably innocent.

Edward, who had previously looked upon his life with Juana as a mere masculine peccadillo, made almost respectable by the children, began to feel himself, before the trusting eyes of Louise, the vilest wretch in the world. He had meant to confess everything in his own good time—since it had been inevitable from the beginning that Harkness would

he told by some one—but now he could not bear to have her know.

"Well, he said—he said——" Louise began, but stopped as Valentin entered.

"*Señorita, la almuerzo está lista,*" announced Valentin.

"Did he say luncheon is ready?" asked Louise. "You know, I've learned quite a lot of Spanish already, but when they run the words together, I don't understand at all!" She laughed and led the way to the dining room.

"Oh, Valentin, you have laid Mr. Watts' place opposite mine! Change it at once, please." She turned to Edward. "You must sit next to me," she said cooingly.

Valentin looked inquiring at Edward. "*Ano bu-ut?*" (What does she want?) he asked.

"The señorita says to change my place so my back is to the window. My head aches and the light hurts my eyes," explained Edward elaborately, thinking how pleasant it would be to kick Valentin down the stairs. He fixed the boy with a stern eye and watched his smile fade away.

"Where did you learn that queer native language? It sounds awfully difficult!" said Louise. She sat down, and her white ruffles spread about her like a cloud.

"You look like a beautiful pink and gold rose!" whispered Edward, as Valentin was drawing the cork from a claret bottle.

"You must have been a lot with the natives to speak it like that," continued Louise with feminine tenacity.

"Oh, yes, I've done business with the natives for eight years or more," replied Edward. "The lingo isn't hard to learn, once you get the hang of it."

"I'd love to learn it! Will you teach me?" cried Louise, clasping her hands.

"No, dear—no. It wouldn't be nice for you. Too guttural," stammered Edward. "But I'll help you with your Spanish if you like."

"Won't John be surprised when he gets back to-night!" exclaimed Louise suddenly. "You must be here when he comes in. I don't want to tell him alone."

Edward lost his appetite all at once for the delicious fish which Valentin had just placed before him.

"Yes, dear, I'll tell him, of course," he muttered, and fell into silence.

His natural optimism, a heritage from Ireland, had not permitted him to foresee these complications of a civilization he had half forgotten. Now he must think how to explain his situation to John Harkness, who would be prejudiced, perhaps, but still not unreasonable. Harkness was another man and would look at matters from a male viewpoint. He might even help him with Louise, thought Edward, and hoped she would not cry when she was told. He hated himself when he thought she might suffer through him.

"Ned, I've something important to ask you," said Louise, looking up from her plate.

"Yes, darling; what is it?"

"What do you think of my going to Manila for my trousseau by the boat to-morrow? I'll be back in a week, and we can be married here. I should adore having a quaint little wedding in the old Spanish church on the plaza. That funny little fat padre can marry us. He showed me the relics yesterday, and said he knew you. Then, after you settle up your business here, we can leave for the States."

"Whatever you like," replied Edward. He pressed a cold hand to his forehead.

After all, what did it matter if they were married in Juana's church by Padre Gordillo? He would do anything, suffer anything, if only he could carry off this glorious girl to what he called God's country." He gazed at her adoringly. Never had there been hair so golden or skin so fair.

He arose unsteadily.

"I must go back to my office," he said.

"You may take me riding at five o'clock. I want to try my new pony." Louise slipped her arm through his and walked to the door.

"I'll come at five," said Edward, pressing her hand. As Valentin opened the door for him, he avoided meeting the brown boy's eyes.

"Valentin! We're going to be married! We're going to be married!" sang Louise, as soon as the door closed on Edward. She danced about the room and her yellow hair tumbled down on her shoulders.

Valentin eyed her coldly.

"*No comprendo*," he said, and left the room.

"How unsympathetic these natives are!" thought Louise.

Edward went home at half past four. The children, playing in the doorway, shrieked with joy and held out sticky hands. Juana, not expecting him so early, was squatting on her bare heels in a corner of the sala, chewing betel nut. The blood-red juice trickled from the corners of her mouth.

"Get up," he commanded roughly. "What did I get all these chairs for? Why do you sit like a monkey? I want a bath and my riding clothes, quick."

The children began to cry.

"Keep quiet!" roared Edward. His nerves felt raw. He saw Pepito's eyes—his own blue eyes in a strange little brown face—open wide with fear.

Juana picked up the baby and took Pepito by the hand. She put them both in the farthest corner of the patio.

"Thou art a big boy, old enough to hold thy sister. Stay here quietly. Soon I'll come with something sweet for thee."

The boy's chin quivered.

"*Oo-oo, nonay.*"

Juana ran to lay out Edward's riding clothes. As he was dressing, he began to talk.

"Juana—to-night you go to your mother at Palo. Take the children. This shirt is torn. Give me another. There will be money. There will always be money for you. Do you understand?"

Juana's heart stopped beating. She opened her mouth convulsively.

"Aaah! No! No!"

"Don't make a scene, Juana. Be sensible. Remember, there will always be money. And some day you will marry. Yes, I want you to marry. The money will come just the same. Now go and get your things packed."

"No, no!" Juana fell to her knees.

"Get up! I haven't time for scenes. Pack quickly. I'll tell Pedro to get the carriage ready. Now be a good girl. I'm going away to my own country—to America."

"You do not go alone?"

"No, Juana. I'm going to be married. I am to marry an Americana. You be a good girl, Juana. There'll always be money for you and the children."

He pulled her to her feet, frightened in spite of himself by her limpness and the grayness of her face.

She began to sway from side to side. She breathed in sharp gasps, like an animal in pain.

"Aaah! Aaah! Aaah!"

Edward had not expected anything like this. Juana had never before failed to submit instantly to his will in all things. It had not occurred to him that she would protest when he left her. He had fancied it an altogether simple matter to send her home with the children and thereafter to provide money for her from time to time. She was being absurd and unreasonable. He began to feel uneasy. This life he had thought to shake off with scarcely an effort was clinging to him. He must get away quickly.

He drew a long breath, took a step toward the door, and stopped. He did

not know how to part with the agonized woman before him. Obviously, a man could not shake hands in a matter-of-fact way with a woman with whom he had been living for eight years.

He picked up his riding crop from a chair.

"Well, good-by, Juana," he said finally, and walked into the sala. From the room he had left came those horrible sounds:

"Aaah! Aaah! Aaah!"

Edward wiped his forehead with a hand that shook. He passed quickly down the stairs, and snatched the bridle of his horse from the *cochero*.

"Harness the horses to the victoria and take Juana and the children to Palo," he ordered.

"Yes, señor," answered his *cochero*, looking down.

Edward felt the old man's disapproval.

"Thank Heaven, I'll soon be out of this and back in God's country!" thought Edward, as he prodded his horse and galloped across the bridge and down the coral road.

Louise was waiting for him in front of her house. She wore a smart riding habit of white linen, coat and breeches. Her yellow hair was tied with a black ribbon. She wore no hat. To Edward's adoring eyes she looked more beautiful than Diana of old, as she examined with delight her new white pony and saddle of shiny brown leather, which creaked when the little horse heaved out his sides.

Valentin brought them tea as they stood there, and they sipped it from Chinese cups and nibbled at sweet biscuits, laughing like children. To Edward, the picture of Juana's despair was already blotted out. It had become already something buried in the past. He was enjoying a sense of relief to its full, when the sound of galloping hoofs made him turn his eyes down Calle Pelayo. Approaching them, from Calle

Real, was one of Edward's carriage horses. He recognized it at once by its color. Presently, he saw that old Pedro was astride the pony, beating its sides with bare heels as he urged it to greater speed.

Pedro grazed a *carabao* cart as he passed it and pulled up, nearly losing his balance.

"Señor! Come quick! Return to your house! Juana jumped in the river!" The old man waved his arms wildly. "We got her out and sent for the priest. She wants you to come."

"Go back. I'll come," ordered Edward quietly.

Pedro dug his heels into the pony's ribs and, turning, loped away.

"What is it? Oh, what is it?" cried Louise, frightened. "What did he say? Tell me what he said!"

Edward's mind, brought back from his new dreams, went again into the practical commonplaces of his daily life.

"An accident. I must go! I'll come back later," he said, and sprang into the saddle.

"Ned, where are you going? Don't leave me!" wailed Louise.

But Edward was already galloping down Calle Pelayo. The shock of Pedro's words had driven from his mind, for the time being, everything except the habits of his daily life. A tragedy had happened at his home. Juana had jumped in the river. She wasn't dead. They had pulled her out. Perhaps a doctor would be needed. And the children. They were probably frightened to death and crying for him to come and put things right again. Edward was feeling quite automatically his responsibility as head of a family.

Back in Calle Pelayo, Louise seized Valentin's arm.

"What is it, Valetin? *Qué es?*"

"La mujer del señor ha saltado en el río," answered the boy. He did not explain his relation to Juana. He did not ask permission to leave the house.

He turned and ran from the girl without ceremony, his bare feet taking the road in great strides.

Louise watched his thick thatch of black hair bob up and down as he ran, and she tried to understand what he had said. "*Mujer*" was woman. "*Rio*" was river. The connection was obvious. So it was true! He had been living with a woman. The woman had tried to kill herself.

Louise did not hesitate. She mounted her pony and followed Valentin down Calle Pelayo. She felt she must know and see for herself.

Who was this woman with a prior claim? Not an American, for Edward had told her that very day that he had not seen any American women except "homely schoolteachers and missionaries." A Spaniard, perhaps. It sounded rather a Spanish thing to do—to jump in the river because love was gone. Louise had no doubt that it was on her account the woman had tried to kill herself. Edward had probably told her he was going to marry. The dramatic flavor of the incident did not altogether displease her. She would, of course, pretend to be furious with Edward for this affair. And after they were married, she could always reduce him to humility by reminding him of it.

Valentin turned a corner by the plaza and reduced his pace to a dog trot. Louise walked the pony, her heart beating fast with excitement and suspense. She wanted to question Valentin and wished she could think of some Spanish words which would fit this situation.

They came to a large white house, not unlike the one John Harkness had rented. Valentin mounted the stairs outside the house and entered the open door. Louise jumped from her pony and followed him.

No one was in the *sala*. Through the door to the kitchen she saw two brown women hurrying to and fro and talking

excitedly. To the right, from Edward's room, came sounds of sobbing. Louise walked to the door and looked in.

On the bed lay a brown woman whose long face was distorted with grief. Her blue lips were curled back, displaying pink gums and broken teeth, discolored by betel nut. Her eyes rolled whitely in her head. Her hair, black and coarse, was dripping with river water and greasy with coconut oil. Her hands, like black claws, twisted and supplicated. A plump little priest stood over her, speaking in their soft tongue. Edward, arms folded, was looking through the window across the river toward the town.

Louise entered. The woman on the bed saw her and tried to pull herself up.

"She's come for him! Why didn't they let me die?" she shrieked.

"Quiet, my daughter," admonished the padre.

Edward turned. He met the blazing eyes of Louise and bowed his head.

"Is it possible you have loved this—this ape? You were coming to me from her?"

Edward did not reply. He could not raise his head and again meet those eyes filled with horror of him.

"How horrible! Oh, to think I let you touch me!" Louise, with lips that curled in scorn, looked again at Juana.

"I thought I was through with America and Americans when I came out here," he said in a low, choked voice. "A girl treated me badly while I was at college. I left and decided to see the world. I didn't want any more of America. It was all unsympathetic to me."

"Is that your excuse for living with a—a native—and for deceiving me?" Louise cried, her voice shrill with anger.

"These islands were like dope to me. I wanted to forget everything else. That's why I lived among the Filipinos."

"That's how I met—her." Edward pointed to the bed.

"How dared you ever speak to me—how dared you?" panted Louise.

Edward did not hear her question. His desire was to make her understand a little of what had happened to him in those first years.

"When you get used to these people, they seem like every one else," he said. "You don't think of them as being—well, inferior. I lived in a nipa shack at first out in Palo. Juana, there, lived next door. Later, when I made money and bought this house, it seemed all right for her and the baby to come here with me. I expected to live and die in these islands. I never dreamed of knowing a wonderful girl like you! When I met you, I woke up. Suddenly, it seemed as if all this didn't matter at all—as if it had been a dream! I wanted to go back where I belonged. I wanted a real life. Oh, Louise, can't you understand? Can't you forgive me?"

"Understand? Forgive? I hate you for what you've done! I shall despise you to my dying day! You lived with that brown woman there and you would have come to me from her!"

Tears of anger and outraged pride stood in Louise's eyes. She looked at Juana, who stared back at her dumbly and uncomprehendingly. To Juana, all people were brown except a few extraordinary Americans, Spaniards, and English. It was the natural way to be.

The women in the kitchen came to the door, bearing hot drinks. Behind them toddled Pepito and the baby, pleased and excited by the unwonted activity in the house.

Pepito caught sight of the beautiful Americana whose hair was like sunlight.

"Ooh! By-by nga smokin!" (Pretty lady!) he cried.

Louise turned at the sound of a child's voice. She saw Edward's eyes staring

at her from two mottled little faces the color of coffee.

"Oh!" she cried. "Oh, oh!"

She pushed aside the astonished women in her path, and rushed from the house.

Edward, stunned by his calamity, made no effort to follow. The priest touched his arm.

"Juana's death would have been upon your soul, señor, had she perished. Listen to me, and save yourself and her! Let me marry you—here, to-night."

Edward did not reply. He brushed the priest's hand from his arm, and stared at Juana, seeing her for the first time with foreign eyes—the eyes of Louise.

Valentin entered the room.

"How are you, cousin?" he asked timidly, and took Juana's hand. She shook her head impatiently in his direction, without taking her eyes from Edward.

The American went into the sala and sat down at the window overlooking the distant bay. There was the steamer at anchor on which Louise had planned to go to Manila for her trousseau. He buried his face in his hands.

The priest went away, shaking his head. Juana, grieved that she had occupied the American's bed rather than her own straw mat, dragged herself out of it and replaced the wet linen with dry. She even tried to prepare his food, but had to lie down from weakness. One of the women with Juana carried in a plate of rice and fish and placed it on the table near Edward. She lighted the big oil lamp and placed it beside the food.

Edward did not move through the long evening.

About midnight, a quick knocking sounded at the door. Edward did not lift his head as he called "Come in." It was Valentin.

"Señor," he said. "Señor." The boy's brown eyes shone in the lamp-light.

Edward did not speak.

"Listen, señor. I bring you news of the señorita."

Edward raised his head slowly and looked at the boy with hollow eyes.

"What news?"

"She has packed everything. To-morrow she goes to Manila by the morning boat. Then back to America."

"She sent you to me? Have you a message?" Edward half rose in his chair, and life seemed to return to his body.

"Nothing, señor."

The American walked into his room and closed the door.

Valentin sought Juana. He found her in the patio, holding the children in her lap, and weeping upon them as they slept.

"The Americana goes to-morrow—without him," Valentin told her exultantly, and saw with joy the hope that leaped into her eyes.

Juana roused the two women and Pedro. All night they whispered among themselves, listening meanwhile to the footsteps of the American, as he walked up and down his room.

It was nearly eight o'clock when Edward flung open his door. Outside, in the sala, squatted Juana, facing his room. Her hair, uncombed from the previous morning, hung about her face, like strands of blackened hemp. Her *camisa* fell from one shoulder. The baby lay asleep in her arms. Pepito squatted on the floor at his mother's side. His blue eyes were solemn and round.

Edward took in every detail of the pitiable little group. Through the door leading to the kitchen, he saw also Juana's friends and Pedro squatting and chewing betel nut, while they waited to see what the American would do.

In his own suffering, Edward became all at once sensible to the suffering of others. The sight of these human beings waiting to see what disposition he

would make of their lives suddenly touched him. He had ruined his own happiness, but there was one thing he could still do for the sake of the manhood that was in him. He could make these others happy, even if in so doing he flung away any future chance of rebuilding his life. Since he had failed with the woman he loved, he might as well cut himself irreparably adrift from country and countrymen in one supreme sacrifice.

He threw both arms above his head.

"Send for the priest!" he shouted.

Juana, not daring to move, sat where she was until Pedro led in Padre Francisco Gordillo, smiling and rubbing his hands. The fat little priest placed the American before him and called Juana to come and stand beside Edward. Juana put down the baby. Blanca began to cry at being thus suddenly awakened, and was comforted, throughout the reading of her mother's marriage service, by the grave Pepito.

As complacently as if his had been the influence that had brought about this holy marriage, the padre read the ceremony, emphasizing the soft Spanish vowels and rolling the r's with unction.

Edward fixed his eyes on a distant steamer, flying the American flag, which he could see through the window, as it moved slowly down the harbor, bearing his heart and his hopes for the future. He saw himself through all the years to come, cut off from his own people, a despised "squaw man," tolerated by men, cut by women. Each newcomer to the island would hear his story. He would be pointed out like Nate Oldborough in Tanauan and Danny Morrison in Tacloban. This would be his existence.

The padre's voice died away. It was over.

Edward drew a long breath which was almost a sob. Then he turned to the ugly brown woman at his side, and kissed her.



Philanderer's Progress

By Paul Hervey Fox

Author of "The Stone Serpent," etc.

II.—Stella

AS the curtain fell for the final time, and the first-night audience, to the strains of a pompous march, poured through the exits with eyes blinking and faces which seemed drawn and pale under the sudden glare of light, Steven Trayle rose and made his way rapidly backstage.

Confusion hung here like smoke after a pitched battle. George Rider held Beth Savarin's hand firmly, and seemed, by the act of shaking it at intervals, to punctuate a low, unintelligible oration. Near by, a melancholy little Israelite, with pathetic, Oriental eyes and a face in which sensitiveness and vulgarity were commingled, watched them with a brooding and patient air. Sceneshifters banged, hammered, and hallooed to each other in the echoing wings. Members of the company fled toward the dressing rooms, or were gathered in garrulous excitement; and the women, beplastered with thick, bright paints, lifting their powdered arms and weighted eyelids with convulsive movements, had the appearance of monstrous, mechanical dolls.

Enthusiasm was a force in the atmosphere; it swept aside Steven Trayle's diffidence. He found himself unexpectedly shaking hands with a tall girl whose eyes, intense and dark, seemed to glow under an immense swirl of bronze hair.

"Your performance was splendid, Miss Lane, splendid!" he exclaimed, working himself into a pitch of deliber-

ate emotion. Suddenly, he no longer felt himself a mere onlooker; and he was as elated as one of the players, when she gave him a steady, grateful glance, and answered impressively:

"Thank you. Oh, thank you! I saw you out front with Mr. Rider, and knew you understood."

Steven did not inquire exactly what it was that he had understood. He was studying her in the light of firsthand knowledge, although he remembered that he had rustled a program as the play opened, and idly asked Rider some question or other regarding her.

"Who? Stella Lane?" the playwright had answered, with his hands gripping the arms of his seat in a nervous clutch. "Only know her through rehearsals. She played a nice bit in 'Roses of Yesterday' last season. Saw her; engaged her. She's going to marry that Julian fellow, by the way. You've heard of him: Foster Julian, the explorer, traveler, and all that business. He's here to-night, of course. You must meet him. Oh, damn! They missed it, totally missed it!"

George Rider bowed his head with a low groan. Steven, genuinely startled, asked in a whisper:

"What's the matter? What's happened?"

"They were supposed to laugh at that line," the wretched author explained hoarsely. "It didn't go over. The fools! I waste my brains on them."

He moaned and swore so persistently through the whole performance, that Steven finally became callous to his suffering. Besides, it seemed obvious to him that "The Undying Lure" bore the stamp of assured success.

In an age when every fifth man on the street pretends to the distinction of an artist, there are few who cannot roll the name of a semicelebrity on their tongues. "Only the other day, Dashwood Harkness, the novelist, you know, was saying to me—" is a familiar form of prelude for many a dull anecdote. George Rider, with his cynical blue eyes, might have served the same purpose for Steven Trayle, had he cared: They had been friends in boyhood, and for all that they met so seldom, they had for each other a warm, scoffing affection.

The whim which had directed Steven Trayle at thirty-six to sell out his profitable business, quit the alluring oblivion of his books, and set forth to seek adventures on his own account, was responsible, also, for their reunion. Steven, gentle and reflective, cherished a secret purpose at which he himself laughed a little. He knew nothing of that emotion which the imagination of man has made the source of the soul and the aim of existence; he knew nothing of love.

Through a profound reticence and simplicity, he had, almost incredibly, been passed over by life, its destroying passions, its more frequently destroying sentimentalities. He had awakened sharply to a knowledge of barren years, and told himself that he would realize a perfect love whether he were to discover it in the placid routine of domesticity or in the ardors of some swift, wild episode. He would journey from flower to flower until he found a honey to his palate.

In a fortnight's stay at his brother's country house on Long Island, he had encountered a mild disaster and acquired

a little wisdom. Returning to New York, he had looked up George Rider and was promptly seized upon to witness the agonies of a sensitive playwright at a première. The experience was novel and marked by an odd excitement, like the excitement of a wedding which might, at any moment, turn into a funeral.

And now, on the professional side of the curtain, Steven found himself confronting Stella Lane, found himself staring at her with quickened senses. In spite of a flash of effectiveness, she could not honestly lay claim to beauty. But her dark eyes rested upon Steven with undoubted interest, and he liked the clear, serious tones of her voice, as she asked:

"You're coming, of course, to Sid Goldman's? You've heard he's giving us all a celebration at his apartments?"

Steven glanced at the sad and insignificant figure of the little Israelite whose devotion to Beth Savarin had induced him to back "The Undying Lure" with his capital, and to permit George Rider to appear as his own producer.

"Why—I don't know—" he began hesitatingly.

She placed her hand on his arm softly, and softly withdrew it. It was done in the space of a breath, and Steven was left wondering whether it had really happened.

"But I want you to come," she said earnestly.

Steven recollected that she did not even know his name. Why in the world was she anxious for his company? Perhaps she confused him with some one else—some dramatic critic, possibly. His mind suggested a dozen vague explanations. But she stirred his curiosity. He was about to make some rejoinder, when she assumed a complete change of expression. She rubbed her nose, which was small and well shaped; and the simple act had a spirit of humor, of something unaffected and friendly.

It was almost as if she had admitted, by a trivial gesture, that life was cheerfully commonplace as well as romantic.

Steven turned to perceive a tall, lean man striding toward them with his head bent slightly forward.

This was Foster Julian. Steven regarded him with a private attitude of hostility which was promptly swept away by the man's charm, his hesitating shyness. His pale eyes fell upon Steven and flickered away. His high forehead was lined with thoughtful wrinkles. Yet, a sense of indomitable courage, of something inscrutable and sad, hung about him like an aroma.

Steven caught George Rider's eye, and prepared to join him.

"You'll—you'll be there?" Stella Lane inquired with a quick look.

He nodded, but his smile was puzzled.

"I'm glad—Mr. Trayle!"

Steven walked across the stage with a bewildering thought revolving in his head. She knew his name, after all! How the deuce——

He was swept up in a noisy crowd, and emerged upon the street where a large closed car and several cabs waited at the curb. Steven found himself piloted by George Rider into one of these; but he hardly listened to the babble of voices on the way to Mr. Sid Goldman's apartment.

His mind was occupied with the consideration of a tall girl with dark eyes and a crown of bronze hair. His blood pulsed with the suggestion of a warmer intimacy with her. He was somehow sure that he was to know her emotionally. But the issue was clouded with mystery. She was engaged to marry Foster Julian, whose name, whose independent fortune, whose inscrutable personality, might be counted upon to win any woman, if the writers were not all liars.

In the darkness of the bumping cab, Steven stared rigidly ahead.

Mr. Goldman's apartment proved to be an entire floor in a large Park Avenue building. The high, wide rooms, with beamed ceilings and carved wainscoting, had the oppressive air of some luxurious dungeon. Vivid rugs and cumbersome rococo pieces did not dispel that sense of somberness. The furnishings struck one bold, harsh note, like a German poster.

Yet the actors showed no reaction to that atmosphere. They chattered, laughed, and were irrepressible. With grave, lowered eyes Mr. Goldman directed fresh disbursements from his private stores of champagne. George Rider was in high spirits, full of a not unpleasant vanity, and his sentences flashed with that good-humored malice for which he was known. Buoyancy ruled the table, swept even Beth Savarin from her cold boredom; and Steven's observant attention lighted on Foster Julian, smiling desperately and evidently ill at ease.

When they left the table, the thin, languid stage manager walked to the piano, with a grin, and began to play with pleasant carelessness.

"Great fun for monkeys without tails!" Rider shouted in Steven's ear. "Come on! And, by the way, lunch with me to-morrow. We must talk. Goldman's not a bad sort, is he? Hullo! There's Beth again."

He darted across the room. Steven turned, and as he did so, found Stella Lane advancing toward him. He had resolutely avoided her eye at the table; he hardly knew why, unless it was out of respect for the unhappy Julian. Her first words had a directness that he was to associate with her later.

"Mr. Trayle, I've come to ask you a favor. But you don't need to do it. Please be honest with me. I—I want you to be that."

"Anything that I can do——" Steven muttered.

"I don't like crowds," she said in a whisper. "I want to go home. I want you to take me. Now. Unless—unless you don't want to leave."

Steven gazed at her in perplexity. What, he wondered, was the answer to this riddle? What of Foster Julian? Why had she deserted him? Yet he tried to make his affirmative simple and unhesitating.

Their departure was like an escape. They slid out of the room when an opportunity offered, obtained their wraps, and disappeared without a word.

"It will be easier," Stella declared in a low, troubled voice.

Steven had a vision of something sinister that threatened her, and, for an instant, Foster Julian and even little Goldman were conjured before his eyes like the malevolent shapes of a fantasy. Surely Julian hid some black design, to merit treatment like this! Steven thrust aside his ponderings with a stir of gallantry.

"I don't know what's happened. But I am glad to be of service. And I shan't annoy you by prying."

"Thank you," she murmured, but her voice lacked a convincing gratitude. She said very little after that, beyond refusing to take a cab. "I love to walk. I love wide, big spaces! I don't like the city."

They went silently, yet without constraint, down the peaceful street, which was softened, as with mist, by the pale radiance of the lamps. Steven noticed her free, graceful stride, caught glimpses of a not uncomely profile, and his sympathy hovered over her dim distress.

In the lobby of a small apartment hotel, east of Broadway, he shook hands with her solemnly.

"If I can be of use to you at any time, you'll let me know?" he ventured. She gave him a pleading look.

"I want to see you. I want to see

you very much! I couldn't tell you to-night. Will you—would you mind—coming to tea to-morrow?"

"I shall be delighted," said Steven with a level glance.

Her hand went up and rubbed her nose fleetingly. That mannerism seemed to Steven to shatter once more the dramatic falsities of their position. But her eyes, resting upon him quietly, and her voice, coolly critical, performed the function even more efficiently.

"You're rather formal, aren't you?" she asked, and sped for the elevator.

Steven stood there, gazing after her a little angrily. Unspoken retorts trembled upon his lips. All at once, without understanding how he knew, a conjecture, a surety, swept into his mind. Her final word, a word of disappointment, somehow strengthened the idea. She was—well, interested in him!

II.

So it was that Steven sought George Rider the next day with an ax of his own to grind. Rider could tell him certain things, perhaps, illumine even the essential mystery. He found the playwright still asleep in his rooms. These were located in a tall studio building in the West Forties, which had the cold, stately beauty of a cathedral.

A Chinaman, whose expression of silly amiability belied his unsmiling eyes, ushered him, as a privileged familiar, into the bedroom. The author threw a surly greeting at Steven, drank three cups of black coffee, and shaved with a pipe in his mouth. And presently the two friends drove downtown to lunch at a famous old actors' club.

Rider appeared to awaken by degrees. He smiled reminiscently over the previous evening.

"Where were you, anyway? You must have slipped away like a tame rabbit. We had a wild time! Goldman will have to tip like a lord not to get

dispossessed. We waited until the morning papers arrived, and that little fool, Benson, wept because he didn't even get a notice. I pay no attention to the reviewers myself. They're unimportant—the lot of them! Don't know their business. Sourballs and sore-heads. Do you know what Osgood Thomas had the dashed impertinence to say? 'A naïve audience, however, seemed to find a mild pleasure in Mr. Rider's latest mediocre effort. But, perhaps they were all there on paper.' By Jove! If they allowed critics in this club——"

"Don't they?" asked Steven with a glance around the dining room, with its weatherbeaten air, its yellowing playbills framed on the walls, and a glimpse of a tall Sargent portrait through the doorway. Two actors, lunching late, discoursed in low, pompous tones at another table, and the sound rose like a drowsy murmur in the dignified old room.

"Of course they don't!" growled Rider. "You might as well expect kings in a society for anarchists."

Steven said suddenly:

"George, I want you to tell me what you know about Stella Lane."

Rider cocked one lucent, blue eye.

"What's up? She asked me your name last night, I remember. Look out, my boy, when they get friendly! Probably she wants to borrow money, and is afraid to ask Julian."

"Confound your cynicism!" said Steven irritably. "She's not like that. She told me last night she hated the city, liked to take long walks, be out in the air, and things of that sort."

Rider bit into a roll, and spoke as he chewed vigorously:

"Humph! I know that line. Long walks! She wants to keep down her figure, of course. And though she's got a damned pretty nose, I wish she wouldn't rub it all the time just to show she doesn't use powder."

"See here!" said Steven. "You can't apply the standards of the profession to every one who's in it. You can't——"

"Can't I, though? I played on the boards myself once upon a time, you may recall. Learned my game that way. And what fun those days were! Though, as a matter of fact, I was wretched and broke half the time. Let me tell you, the profession hasn't any standards, in spite of the virtuous indignation displayed by some of its elderly flappers in their interviews. Why, the only time I was ever honestly in love, I had to leave town to go on the road in one of old Dan Roper's pieces. I went away swearing eternal faithfulness. Wouldn't so much as look at the leading lady. She'd been having a rum-pus of her own and was in the same boat. Well, after a week or so—you've no idea how lonely it is!—you've got to talk to some one—we broke the ice. Before the tour was a quarter done, we were rather more than friendly, don't you know! In fact, I used to write all her letters for her to that Johnny—she was a stupid girl—and she'd laugh, leaning over me with her arms around my shoulders very affectionately. Yes! They're all alike! Don't tell me about the theater, you pious old hermit!"

Steven left Rider with a sense of relief. He did not enjoy having his illusions broken like so many glass balls. As he strode, in the deepening spring weather, toward Stella Lane's apartment, there ran through his meditations, like a thread, the playwright's good-humored skepticism. No doubt he was right. And if so, let Foster Julian look to his own concerns! Surely Stella's dark eyes promised romance.

He found her in her rather dim little rooms, waiting for him with an expectant air. A Russian novel or so, a copy of the confessions of Mary McLane, and an issue of *Variety* lay upon the table.

"I thought you were never coming!" she said in a low voice.

"But I'm early."

"It does not seem so to me!"

Their glances met, and Steven had a sense of barriers pleading to be broken down—that old, old allure. He dropped his eyes, and spoke of the play of the evening before and of the varying opinions of the reviewers. Then, suddenly, an awkward silence fell between them. Stella Lane rose and stared out of the window. All at once she turned sharply, and Steven noticed that her hands were shaking.

"I've got to tell you! It's insane of me! But this—this is different."

"Please be frank," Steven said gently. "Let me know what is making you—making you unhappy. Perhaps I can do something."

"Can't you guess?" she murmured. "Don't you see? I feel as if you must realize."

A suspicion flashed into Steven's mind, but he flung it away as nothing short of preposterous. And, almost at the same instant, he heard her say swiftly and all but inaudibly:

"I love you!"

What man of the romantic temperament is fortified against an appeal to his vanity? A man may, perhaps, conceive of himself as lacking good looks, superficial charm of individuality, and—even!—great brains. But, what imaginative man does not cherish the illusion that in him lurks some subtle spark, unseen by his fellows, unseen often by himself, but there indubitably, a magnetism mysterious, intangible, and profound, uniting him to the great of the earth.

Steven Trayle regarded her seriously, tenderly. In the face of a love so vital that it was proffered frankly, he put aside his urbane insincerity as cowardly and cruel. He said softly:

"But, my dear, I don't love you. I've—I've only just met you."

"What does time matter!" she cried dramatically. "I realized that you were the man I was meant to love as soon as you spoke to me. I come to you like this. I can't play little tricks. This is too big for that."

He was silent, but immensely moved.

She cried bitterly:

"And you don't love me! You don't love me! I can't live if you don't!"

Steven began to feel uncomfortable. He cast about for some expedient to lighten this too tense atmosphere. Acting on a sudden whim, he pulled out his watch and placed it on the table.

"No," he said soberly, "I don't love you now. But I will fall in love with you in exactly three minutes!"

She managed to laugh at that. She rubbed her shapely little nose, and her voice grew quieter.

Steven studied her intently, though he was scarcely conscious of what she was saying. Something about her life, her past, and her hopes, he gathered. And, presently, his eyes fell upon his watch, ticking away the seconds a little frantically.

"Time's up!" he cried. He threw his arms around her, kissed her cheeks, her lips. "I adore you!" he exclaimed in a burlesque of seriousness. "I worship you! Can't you believe me? I was lying when I said I didn't care. My darling!"

She laughed a little bitterly, struggled somewhat, and, as he continued to caress her, to talk floridly, relaxed suddenly in his arms.

"Dear, I'm so glad! I'm so happy!" she murmured.

Steven was rigid with amazement; he heard her voice as from far away:

"It's so wonderful that you should care like that! I'd—I'd rather marry you than any one else in all the world."

Before a blindness so appalling, a blindness that could not perceive what even a child would have detected as farce, Steven's thoughts whirled dis-

zily. He stammered something; he could not—he dared not—disillusion her; and then he said unsteadily:

"What—what about Foster Julian?"

"I wrote him this morning. I told him I couldn't see him again. He was very fond of me. He persuaded me into—into an arrangement. But I knew when I saw you that it was either you or no one."

As Steven held her there, his mind glided through smooth shades into an attitude that appeared impulsive. After all, why not marry her? Why not? She loved him; that was fairly clear! She had ousted the attractive Julian for his favor. And the sensuous warmth of her body, nestling against his, almost convinced him for the moment that he felt for her a passion complete and authentic.

He drove back his hesitations imperiously, but his thoughts still hung on the bewildering remembrance that she had taken for fact what had been, so obviously, heavy comedy. It dawned on him that women sometimes prefer a lie to the truth, even when they are aware that it is a lie. They can convince themselves of its verity, later, by some queer logic of their own, or else magnificently ignore it. Steven was making headway in his understanding of women.

III.

Of course, the man was inconsistent. I do not dispute that. Yet how many men, who are worth looking at twice, are consistent? There are few of us who know what we want and remain faithful to that desire until we have possessed ourselves of it. Devil and saint struggle alternately in most men; and, it might be added, they are prepared to be equally vain of either distinction.

Steven Trayle had set out, without conscious direction, to yield himself to whatever winds there were. Yet, pass-

ing moods, like gusts, swung him this way and that: toward sentimental longings, toward a smiling irony. He did not know whether he wished to see himself as an irresponsible rake or as a simple, honest, romantic soul.

And here, he found himself, surely, no gay amorist, but gravely, respectably, engaged to marry Stella Lane. By obscure and soothing processes he ended by finding great cause for satisfaction in his position. When he left her arms, he left reluctantly. When he sought her again, he was as eager as a boy. He was living in the world of his own illusions, shut in so securely that he had no cognizance of the past, nor any patience with the future.

Yet, he was troubled by the memory of George Rider's harsh generalizations. George did not know that Stella was different. He hinted all this a little clumsily to her, and she smiled as she might have smiled at a child, and pushed her fingers through his hair. At times she made him feel painfully young.

"Bring him here. I'm sorry he has such a horrid opinion of me. But, I've not spoken ten words to him in my life."

Steven confided in Rider the following day, and the playwright gave him a scrutiny of pity and embarrassment. He said very slowly:

"I might as well tell you frankly, Steven, that I think you ought to make a run of it. Oh, I'm not saying anything against this woman in particular! You don't need to look so damned chivalrous! But, don't you think it's peculiar the way she chucked poor Julian, as you tell me? I myself would be a little careful with a woman like that. As for going to see her with you—of course! But, mind! You mustn't threaten to shoot me afterward, if I tell you what I think and it doesn't happen to be complimentary."

Steven found it difficult to tell even George Rider that this affair was of a

unique complexion because of the woman's violent and unearthly love for him. He knew he had inspired a grand passion, but it sounded ridiculous to say so. He would let the cynical Rider himself perceive Stella's high sincerity. He insisted on dragging him around that very afternoon.

With feelings of envy Steven watched the two of them burst promptly into loud, animated chatter. Rider roared, shouted, laughed, and she returned the ball. The room was full of a cheerful din over nothing at all; and Steven disconsolately visualized his own quietness, his pale whimsicality.

And, all the while, these two seemed to watch each other closely with mocking eyes, as they tossed about serious issues like trifles and converted all things into noisy, senseless humor. He had never seen Stella in gayer spirits. She danced around the room in an endeavor to prepare tea, and George Rider followed at her heels, humming a sentimental air.

"Oh, a lemon, a lemon!" she cried. "I haven't got a lemon. I don't want to ring downstairs. Steven, will you go out and get one?"

He smiled, nodded, and caught up his hat and stick. She followed him into the corridor; there she flung her arms around his neck to kiss him. And Steven was comforted, and no longer envied Rider his blatant high spirits. He patted her shoulder.

"My dearest!" he whispered. "We'll bring around our George all right. Before I get back, I know you'll have him aware of what a treasure I've won."

"I'll try," she murmured modestly.

When Steven returned from his errand, the boy at the switchboard looked at him inquiringly.

"Miss Lane's apartment."

"Not in," returned the boy, after a vicious jab with the plug.

"But she must be. I just left there."

"Well, she ain't there now. She must have gone out."

Steven scowled in astonishment and indecision. What on earth had happened? Had George Rider, indulging a clumsy fun, carried her off to tea somewhere else? But, even that was better than the fantastic thought that they were both still upstairs and had refused to admit him! He had a feeling of being locked out like some truculent small boy.

For a desperate half hour he waited where he was, hoping that they would come down, fearful that they would, and shooting an occasional dismal glance at the imperturbable switchboard boy. Then, with what dignity he could summon, he stalked out of the building.

He was terribly hurt; his fears, his trembling, sentimental illusions, could scarcely have caused him more anguish had he been the pawn of a genuine passion. Dully, he noticed that it was raining. The streets glistened, and a bus went sailing by with a row of umbrellas lifted upon the roof like dun-colored mushrooms. Steven Trayle tramped the streets for a long while. He harbored a treacherous protest against these miseries. Momentarily, he longed again for the peace of his dark library, and the feel of friendly pages. These fatuous adventures might be vivid, but they were hardly idyllic!

As he walked, he did not permit himself to speculate on what had happened that afternoon. But, presently his mood changed; he grew angry, and, at the thought of Rider, he actually clenched his fists.

All at once, he altered his course and made his way to the stately studio building where the playwright had his rooms. He was informed that Mr. Rider had not yet returned, but the Chinese servant admitted Steven, glad to wait for him, in out of the wet and the gloom. His smoldering rage against Rider deepened as he sat there.

But, Rider did not enter jauntily as he pictured. He came in rather gravely and, at the sight of his visitor, he faltered on the threshold. Steven regarded him with cold, steady eyes. He did not trust himself to speak. Rider put out his hand fumblingly.

"Steven, I'm sorry. I don't want to quarrel with you. I know you were fond of Stella, and she liked you—in a way. But you see—well, it's rather extraordinary. The fact is, she's always cared for me, and I—I——"

Suddenly, as if released by a spring, all the wrath left Steven's heart. He wanted to shout, to shout with a foolish laughter. It was all so funny! It occurred to him that his love had been merely vanity flattered, and his despair had been merely vanity hurt. Hang it! He had never wanted the woman, anyway.

He saw all things with clear eyes, as if a mist had been blown away before his eyes. He saw what had happened this afternoon. In a way he admired her. The tools she employed

were those very means which other women concealed: a devastating candor that was largely a lie and was somehow never aggressive. He, in his innocence, had had no more chance against her than a butterfly against a cobra. But, nothing of all this showed in his face, as he asked quietly:

"Tell me: do you intend to marry her?"

"I—I don't know. See here, old man! Don't let's discuss it. I'm sorry—I can't say any more." He seemed to struggle to place the talk on some more conventional footing. "I'm going to let her play lead in my new comedy, 'The Flirt.' Though, of course, it won't go into rehearsal until next fall."

As Steven stood there, disturbed by warring emotions, at once irritated and relieved by his escape, he could not keep back a little smile. Nor could he keep back a line that rose to his lips and struck him as very much in Rider's own vein:

"Do you think, George, she'll need any rehearsing for the part?"



STUFF OF DREAMS

COINS of silver did I take
To the vintner—and was sold
Stuff of dreams wherewith to make
Some odd poems: which I hold
Was a bargain.

Soon it brought me very near,
Mothwise, to a silver star
By which vagrant spirits steer;
And it lured me very far
On my voyage.

Gave me silver seas to sing,
Hopes to build a raft of song,
To which derelicts may cling
In my wake, as to a long
Silver shadow.

WILLIAM GRIFFITH.



The Baseball Patient in "B."

By C. B. Millay

THE house doctor had made his round of evening calls, and spoke to Joan Emery, the night nurse:

"You will keep awake to-night without any trouble; Webster, the ether patient in 'B,' will see to that. He ought to have a private nurse. Stay in there as much as possible. You can hear the buzzer from there as well as from the office. He must be kept quiet. I wish we were not so short of nurses. But the other patients cannot need much attention."

"But they ring."

"I know they do, whether they need anything or not. They want their pound of flesh. You are losing more than your pound, and with it some of your country roses. You must have a vacation soon. But for to-night—Here is the chart for B. Of course, you understand all about the water, and the one thing is to keep him quiet and from thrashing about. He is a baseball fiend, and a great athlete, and will want to be all over the place. But he must be kept quiet. Good night."

"Good night." The little nurse watched the doctor out of sight, sighed softly, and went her rounds. Some of the patients were already asleep, and she turned off their lights. The pleasant patient in "A" was reading his evening paper. She turned his bed so that the light fell right. He thanked her.

Orangeade; malted milk; a thousand things; and, obligato, the mumblings of the ether patient in B.

"Thank Heaven!" breathed the little nurse devoutly. "His tongue alone is active as yet."

At last, all the lights were out, save in B and in her little office where, face down, lay a half-finished book. She decided to take it along, as there might be quiet minutes when it would help to keep her awake.

Webster's thick tongue was active, but inefficient. It was trying to say: "Water!"

"You may have some soon, a very little, very hot. What are you trying to say? Water? Of course you are! You may have a little very soon. You may have just a swallow now. There, that's better! No more now. Oh, no! No cold water yet! You may have more hot water in just a little while, if this stays down. What's that?"

"Braves! Braves!"

"Yes, of course, you were very brave, and took the ether like a man."

"Braves! Athletics!"

"I'm afraid that you will try to be too athletic for your own good. You must lie still. There!"

"Backstop! Backstop! Backstop!"

"Your back will stop aching in a little while, you must expect to suffer some. There!" She forced him back on his pillows, as with a face like a gargoyle he tried to rise and throw off the clothes.

"Fly! Fly!" She looked all about for the troublesome insect. "High fly! Low fly! A long fly! A tall, foul fly!" he shrieked, throwing his arms about

madly. She tried to follow his frenzied gaze.

"You must lie still! There is not a fly in the room. I will give you a little more water now, if you will be quiet."

"Wait out the pitcher!"

"Mercy, no! Just a spoonful at a time. There, now, that is all nice again."

"Fan—fans—fans—fans—fan the air! Fan the air!"

She fanned him patiently, and mused: "Sick people are very funny sometimes."

"Fanned eight men! Hug the bag!"

"Do you want the hot-water bag nearer? There, how is that?"

"Sliding into the bag!"

"If it is too near, I will move it. There, is that better?"

"Athletics—cold feet——"

"I know your feet can't be cold; but I'll put the bag nearer. How is that?"

"Second bag—third bag——"

"I'm sure you don't really need them, but I will go and get some more."

When she came back, he was yelling lustily: "Braves! Buck fever!"

"I have just taken your temperature, and I know it is all right."

"Clean steal—clean—steal."

"Clean steel? Heavens, yes! Everything is clean, boiled and sterilized. Everything is all right, and you are doing nicely, and all you have to do is to keep quiet, and we will see to all the——"

"Inside stuff!"

"That is all right, too. Everything——"

"Third bag—tossed out—thrown out——"

"No, no! You must not! If they are too hot I will move them."

"Scratch hit!"

"No, indeed! And you couldn't, anyway. The bandages——"

"Clean hit!"

"It is all perfectly clean. You must not fret about anything, for that will

hold back your recovery. You must leave all that to us, and try to go to sleep."

"Red Sox! Braves! Giants! Cubs!"

"But you haven't any!"

"Red Sox! Braves! Giants! Cubs! Athletics!"

"It is nothing but some of his baseball talk."

"Across the rubber! Across the rubber!"

"That rubber sheet is perfectly smooth and it does not touch you. There! That's all nice again! There is that buzzer! I will come right back. You lie perfectly still, and you may have some more water when I come back."

She returned to him in a few minutes. He was muttering:

"A little wabbly. A little wabbly."

"You will be all right when you get on your feet."

"Home! Home! Home! Short-stop—shortstop!"

"Yes, you will soon be going home; you will not have to stop here long, if you keep nice and quiet."

"Home! Home run! Run—home!"

"I wonder if he is getting worse. I have half a mind to call the doctor. His pulse is good. The doctor is probably asleep—and he would only laugh at me. That buzzer again—what ails that old woman that she cannot sleep?"

When she returned, he was still raving, and he kept it up all night.

It seemed to her the next day, when she was awakened suddenly, that she had not been asleep at all. Then she heard the voice of the doctor:

"Miss Emery, are you awake? I am sorry to call you; I know you must be tired, if you went through half, last night, of what we have been going through this morning. It's Webster, the baseball patient in B. His folks insist on his having a private nurse—they took it for granted that he had one. These baseball boys think they

run this country! Do come pretty near it, I guess! They can afford about anything they want, and get it, too. Have it all over us poor doctors!

"We have tried every nurse in the house to-day, with that chap yelling like a fiend: 'Throw 'em out! Toss 'em out! Put 'em out!' and throwing the covers off, and halfway out of bed, with that hole in him! Will you try it? I think perhaps he misses you—sick people have queer notions."

"Yes, sir."

"Of course, it needn't be a sick man's notions to appreciate you, but I don't want them to kill you."

"I will be right down, doctor."

A nice nap followed this new régime; but that night the patient was restless, and talked again.

"Batter! Hitter! Fast ones and spitters!"

"Some of his baseball nonsense," said his little nurse.

He grew more noisy, and Miss Libby, the new night nurse, came to the door.

"You'll have to close your transoms. My patients can't get a wink of sleep, and I haven't been able to read a word to-night."

"The idea! He must have air!"

"Open that other window!"

"Right on the sidewalk?"

"Are you afraid some one will steal him?"

"He hasn't been still a minute to-night."

"I should say he hadn't! He has it all over the D. T's. They ought to put the harness on him."

"That wouldn't keep his tongue still."

"I don't suppose it would. There is that buzzer—let it ring a while! It's that old woman again—bless her!"

Webster, with a face as of mortal agony, was trying to get out of bed, yelling lustily:

"S-t-r-i-k-e one! S-t-r-i-k-e two! Foul play! F-o-u-l p-l-a-y!"

Joan was struggling with him to keep

him in bed, when an interested face appeared at the open window. It was the policeman.

"Any one murdered?" he asked.

"Oh, no! My patient is delirious, that's all."

"He's as crazy as a loon, miss! Did he—he didn't strike yez?"

"Oh, no, of course not! He's quieter now, thank you."

At this, Webster commenced shouting and kicking, twisting and writhing.

Said the officer of the law:

"Are yez afraid of him?"

"No, indeed."

"Oh, give me a drink, please!"

"Sure you will give him a drink, the poor boy! Oi've known thirst and can sympathize wid him, miss. Are yez sure it's water he's wantin'?"

"Certainly; he couldn't have anything else."

"Poor divil! Why don't yez get him his drink? Oi'll watch that he doesn't get out the winder."

"Give me a drink—a pailful! Let me go to the faucet! Water, please!"

"And to hear a man beg loike thot for water!"

"Hold me again—that's right. Somebody hold me—a squeeze—a double squeeze—a tight squeeze!"

"He doesn't know what he's talking about."

"Oi'm not so sure of thot! As the feller said, 'there may be method in his madness.' Seems quieter now. Miss, if yez are wantin' help at any toime, call on me!"

The patient's mutterings grew quieter.

"Catch him napping!"

"They never think they sleep any."

"Nice girl! Long drive to center!"

"He probably thinks he is out driving with his sweetheart."

"Left field!"

"Driving through the fields—it seems so much like home!"

"Left-field drives!"

"It makes me homesick."

"Around the paths!"

"They are walking now. It is like
'Lovers' Lane,' down home."

"Braves—squaw men, let me go!
Don't try to hold me!"

"I must!"

"Outfield! Outfield—green out-
field!"

"If you keep quiet, you will be out
in the fields soon."

"Needless throws—needless—need-
less throws!"

"You will have to ache some, of
course. But you must keep still now;
no, yes, I must hold your hands."

He dozed off for a minute, and when
she saw him open his eyes, she said:

"There now, you are going to be nice
and quiet, and you can take a drink,
yes, a good long one; yes, all you want
this time; then a nap, and then it will
soon be morning."

But morning was long in coming. It
was cramping work, sitting still and
holding the restless hands so long. The
sun peeped in at her early. She sat
huddled on the floor, her head against
the bed, with one of his hands drawn
down back of her head, and held there;
and the other clasped tightly in her
other stiff little hand.

The policeman saw her next; he
smiled knowingly, as he went away,
and said:

"Good night, nurse!"

The young giant, six feet two in his
stockings, or without them, turned a
strangely boyish face in the direction
of his captive hands; opened wide, and
free from the fumes of ether, a pair
of ridiculously blue eyes looked to see
why he couldn't move.

He saw, but even then he didn't
move. He didn't even try to move.
For some reason he didn't want to
move. He thought inanely, as reason
or unreason came back to him, that he
didn't care if he never moved. Then
she moved a little; the sun was deter-

mined to see her eyes. Her patient,
vile deceiver that he was, closed his
own eyes and waited.

Stiff from her long vigil and cramped
position, she rose clumsily, and, through
half-shut eyes, he saw her, yawning and
stretching sleepily, smooth her apron.
Then her hair, which was very beauti-
ful, he noticed in the early sunlight,
came in for a patting into place. She
also righted her cap, which was hang-
ing over one ear.

As for him, he might as well have
been dead, for all of the attention she
paid to him. At last, she looked him
over and looked gratified. "He's had
a nice night, and he will be all right
now," she said aloud to herself. Then
she flitted away to a pleasant-sounding
splashing of water, refreshingly near.

The next day, in the afternoon, he
saw her putting on her hat.

"Where are you going?" he de-
manded in an injured tone.

"Out for a walk; I need the air, you
know."

"Who's going to take care of me?"

"One of the other nurses. We can-
not be on duty all the time; we would
soon wear ourselves out."

"Are you going near a news stand?"

"I can."

"I want you to get me a newspaper."

"You can't have the papers yet."

He waved a huge white hand.

"Will you get me the papers? I want
you to read me the baseball news."

When she returned, some time later,
he looked up eagerly. Then his face
fell ludicrously, puzzling her for a mo-
ment. To gain time to try to remem-
ber something, she watched Miss Nash
leave the room.

"The papers!" he whispered
hoarsely.

She turned helplessly.

"I forgot them."

"What!" he bellowed, sitting upright.
Not very ceremoniously or gently, she

pushed him back on his pillows and glared at him:

"Fool!" she hissed. Then they both laughed. After that, he ventured in a hurt tone:

"I didn't suppose so simple a request——"

"Request! What do you call a command?"

"Was that what made you slat out of the——"

"Slat?"

"Flounce, then, the minute the other nurse entered? She looked as if she——didn't—er—understand it."

"It wasn't any of her business, was it?"

"I suppose not. Was it because of the command that you did not get it?"

"Didn't I tell you I forgot it?"

"The first favor I ever——"

"See here, the one thing I can't stand is a martyr."

Then came a horrible, hair-raising yell:

"E-x-t-r-a-r! E-x-t-r-a-r-r! E-x-t-r-a-r-r-r!"

"Hark! For heaven's sake!" he prayed fervently.

"I'll get one."

"Hark!" he commanded, clutching her wildly.

"E-x-t-r-a-r! L-a-s-t g-a-m-e! L-a-s-t g-a-m-e!"

"Are the big games over?" he yelled.

"Or don't you know?"

"Shall I try to tell you, or try to get the paper?"

"Get the paper!" he pleaded meekly.

"And will you please be quick?"

He held her fast, listening intently.

"Why don't you get it?"

"With that death grip on my shoulder?"

"I beg your pardon! Will you get it now? Got any change? Good heavens! Where are my trousers? He's gone!"

"I'll get it!"

She came back triumphant.

"Read!" he groaned. "And hurry up!" She obeyed. "Read that again!" She obeyed. "Hooray, we win! Hooray!"

"There now," she said firmly, laying down the paper, well out of his reach. "You must not get excited or I will put the paper away."

"The devil you will! Why, girl, do you know what you are saying?"

"Most certainly I do. Lie down."

A grin grew where he was beginning to need a shave very badly. He sank back weakly, folded his great white hands, and rolled his great blue eyes heavenward.

"Please read some more," he begged.

"Please read it to me, every word."

And she did. Then she said:

"Now you must be quiet, or you will be out of your head again all night to-night."

"I will be what?"

"Out of your head, as you have been, wandering."

"How interesting!"

"Not especially."

"To me."

"Oh!"

"Go on!"

"You acted awfully!"

"It doesn't seem possible!"

"You just wouldn't keep still one minute, when so much depended on absolute quiet; and no one could do anything with you but me."

"And never can, from now on."

"What nonsense!"

"I was never more serious. What did I say?"

"Do you expect me to remember all the ravings of all of my patients?"

"Not all of all; but some of some!"

"It was mostly baseball stuff."

"Doubtless."

"And some talk about some girl."

"Get out!"

"How elegant!"

"Isn't it! But I couldn't have, you know."

"Couldn't what?"

"Talk about a girl. Who was she?"

"What did I say?"

"You didn't say what her name was, but you were driving about with her in the country. You went on raving then about Braves and buck fever."

"I'll bet you took my temperature!"

"I didn't."

"What came next?"

"I put ice on your head."

"Pretty good! But say, did I do all that?"

"All that, and much more; I was right here."

"That accounts for it all. I was talking to you."

"You didn't know anything—you were out of your head."

"Then is when I am at my best, then if ever."

"What idiocy!"

"Not in the least. It may be peculiar to me; I shouldn't at all wonder if it was; but it is a fact that I am always the brightest, and know just what I want, when I am unconscious."

"That is nonsense."

"There you are wrong; and, moreover, I am always guided by those subconscious or unconscious decisions. I am controlled, as you might say."

"I might not say any such thing!"

"Where are you going?"

"To get your supper."

When she came back from taking his supper tray away, she met one of the young doctors outside the door, and he stopped her to say:

"We don't want you to kill yourself over that young giant. He'll be all right; you couldn't kill him with an ax; and you, we need you here."

"Do you?"

"I? You know how I feel about it."

"That pronoun 'you' was meant to be plural."

"I see; and I will be careful—I didn't mean to say anything more about myself. But, as for this fellow, he is a

bear; and it is a shame that you should have been drawn to be his keeper."

"Oh, I don't mind, and he will soon be well again, and gone."

"Yes, he will soon be gone."

Strangely enough, as he pronounced that final word, which sounded her coming release, the thought that accompanied it did not bring so much of relief and assurance as it might well have been expected to do.

"Well, and gone." Well, why not? Didn't they all go as soon as they were well enough? Webster's bell rang.

"Isn't your relief with him? Heaven knows, she is human. She may have run off!"

As she entered the room, her patient asked:

"Can't you find some other place than just outside my door for your billing and cooing?"

"Did we disturb you? Certainly, we can find some other place; but why limit so closely your realm? Why do you not say 'My ward,' or 'My hospital'; or 'My street, my block, my neighborhood? You are overmodest!'"

"Was it that skinny pill peddler?"

"It was Doctor Strong." She stopped in confusion, on the ridiculous name.

He lost no chance.

"He looks the part. Are you going to marry that spindle-legged doctor?"

"Well, really——"

"Yes, are you, really?"

"What if I am?"

"Funniest legs I have ever seen!"

"It's too bad his legs do not suit you."

"I should think they could not suit any one. Do they suit you?"

"I haven't given them much thought.

In fact, I believe I have not seen them."

"No more calf than an orang-utan, you know. He came in here in his bath robe; I was ringing for some one; you were out. Are you going to marry him?"

"And if I am?"

"You will soon be a widow; he looks like a lunger!"

"Thank God he is not a brute! But, even if you are right in your gentle prognosis, he might last as long as the most of them; and save the divorce court——"

"Heavens!" Before the exclamation was out, he begrudged it, but he followed on: "So you believe in divorces?"

"Surely; don't you? But, of course, you wouldn't—you are one of that kind! But it is the only thing possible in some cases."

She was gazing straight at him. He turned his head away.

"I would like a drink of water if you are not too busy."

She answered him coldly:

"Am I ever too busy to wait on you?"

"No, you have been a dear!"

"Lie still, can't you?"

"You must be getting sick of me."

"I would as soon be keeper to a dancing bear."

"No, really; am I as bad as that?"

She left him for a while and went to the farther corner by the window to read. Just then the head of the policeman, now on day duty, came suddenly close to her own at the open window. She started nervously.

"Don't be frightened, little one! Oi wouldn't harm a hair of yer pretty head."

She moved away from him, and looked up in quick resentment. He continued coolly:

"Oi wouldn't moind bein' sick if Oi wasn't too sick, just to have yez workin' around me."

She was silent, and tried not to take any notice of him; but he went on, in a low voice, looking up street and down street cautiously: "But yez needn't be afther washin' all yer smoiles on a sick man; for theys thim thot wouldn't run

from wan av thim squeezes he was talkin' about."

She rose decidedly and started to close the window; there were some people passing who looked up in quick interest, and the officer faded from sight with a low: "Oh, you nurse!"

After a little, Webster called to her and she went to see what he wanted. He looked at her anxiously and spoke hesitatingly:

"Do you suppose this hole in my side is going to do me up?"

He paused uncertainly, and his voice shook. She looked down at him and her face softened. The projection of his jaw was exaggerated or at least accentuated by his reclining posture; his jaw was somewhat ludicrous in its aggressiveness; there was something incongruous and pathetic in this utter helplessness of so much strength, and she said gently:

"Your wound will heal."

He went on as if she had not spoken:

"Is it going to do me up on the diamond—the ball field?"

"I, even I, know what the diamond means; and you will be all right again after a while."

"That's what they always say!"

"But the surgeon himself told me that you would be as good as new, that your flesh healed like a baby's."

"Good heavens!" He wiped the sweat from his brow. "What a relief!" he groaned. "Fancy having to give up baseball!"

"But couldn't you do something else to earn a living?"

"Perhaps I could if I wanted to; but I don't want to. Who *would* want to, I ask you now, as man to man?" He rubbed his left biceps ruefully. "My old 'southpaw' is getting a little flabby; but, in comparison with some, it isn't so bad yet. How would your little friend look lugging this arm 'round?"

"Are they going to amputate it?"

"My God! Kid! You win! But

how would he look—I mean this young Galen of yours—how would he look with an arm like that on him?"

She laughed nervously.

"You shouldn't laugh at your intended husband!"

"I didn't laugh at any one; but at a monstrosity your fevered imagination conjured up for me."

"You must think I'm a boob!"

"Is mind reading one of your many accomplishments?"

"It's a good arm! And, anyway, I thank Heaven I'm a southpaw. Why do you look that way? Can it be that you don't know what it means?"

The agony in his face caused her to think hard; but, even then, she was forced to shake her truthful little head. But so charming a process was this very negative that he was partially reconciled to her appalling ignorance of the technique of his art.

"It means, of course, that I am left-handed, and the way we face on the diamond—the—er—diamond, the right-handed pitchers have their mighty rights to the north. Now, in vulgar parlance, which I deplore, a hand has sometimes been called a 'paw,' and this may or may not be a reversal to type; but, anyway, my left paw is toward the south. See? And I think I can use my left arm sooner than I can my right. Don't you think so?"

"I suppose you could, but you mustn't use either of them very soon."

"I shall never be able to use either if I have to stay here very long. I'm getting as nervous as a woman! I can't keep my arms or legs still, the muscles don't behave right, somehow. I never was still so long in my life! I wish there was something I could do with my hands."

"Shall we play solitaire?"

"There wouldn't be much exercise for me in that. I'd give half my young life to get hold of a baseball once more!"

"Much good it would do you!"

"You get me one, and watch me, and see what good it would do me! Just to feel one in my hands! Say! The next time you go out, you just get one for me to look at!"

"I'll get you a rattle!"

She got the ball for him, and watched him as he took the sphere into his cupped hands, a seraphic smile on his face. He shut his eyes and saw bank on bank of white disks which he knew were faces because that was the place to look for faces. There were strange, weird, ugly noises which came from these white disks. They all yelled: "Webster! Webster! W-e-b-s-t-e-r! W-e-b-s-t-e-r! Webster! Webster!"

He could see drawn, tense, frantically poised figures against a blue sky. He saw them moving as if run by some nicely adjusted machinery. He said: "God made man, and man made baseball!"

"Now you had better let me put it on your table. You must be very quiet and sensible with it, or I shall have to put it where you can't even see it. If anything goes wrong, they would be sure to blame me for it."

"Nothing is going to go wrong; but don't talk that way—it takes half the pleasure away in having it."

"If I leave it in your reach, you must promise me that you will not try to throw it up and catch it, or anything like that. I know I ought not to have listened to you and got it for you."

"I give you my word of honor, I will be careful. I just want it to look at; I don't want to get tired out and have to stay here longer. Don't you get awfully tired nursing?"

"Sometimes. Some patients are more trouble than others."

"Do you always have to hold their hands to keep them still?"

"Of course not! What do you mean?"

"Am I favored, especially?"

"You have been especially troublesome."

"You must get very tired sometimes; almost tired enough to—— Or do you sometimes go to sleep on duty?"

"The idea! How did you know that I held your hands?"

"I woke up and you were cuddled up here, sound asleep, with a strangle hold on my hands. I rather liked the idea and—— Never mind that tray, that can wait, and I can't; and I am not going to a minute longer! Isn't there something coming to me, now that we are engaged?"

"What nonsense! And, besides," she mocked, "before any decent girl would be engaged to you, you would have to get a shave!" With this, she left the room with his tray.

As soon as she might be well out of hearing, Webster's buzzer rang till it threatened disconnection. The old doctor was passing and rushed in.

"My dear young man, is there anything wrong?"

"There certainly is! Look at me!"

"Is there something I can do for you?"

"Are you a good barber?"

The doctor laughed.

"Is it as bad as that? Are they uncomfortable?"

"It is not only that; they are a—nuisance!"

"I will have them send in a barber; but you will need some one to help. Where is your nurse?"

"She is out—she is always out!"

"My dear boy!"

Webster's voice grew so oily that it fairly dripped.

"She is always out for the air and my paper at this time of day, after she takes my tray down. When she comes back, she will have her supper, so there will be plenty of time."

"I see. I will send Miss Nash in."

"Don't ever send her in here again! She makes me nervous, sitting there,

rocking; knitting to her rocking; chewing to her knitting; nodding her fool head to her chewing; and showing her legs clear to her knees! First one and then the other!"

"Perhaps you prefer seeing both at once; hasn't she a good-looking ankle?"

"Two of them, I swear it!"

"Do you object to seeing a good-looking ankle or two?"

"Quite the contrary; but I don't like them so damned obvious! I'm sure I beg your pardon."

"I am sure you should. I thought she might be the one I could get the quickest, if you are in any hurry."

"Send in the rocking, squinting, knitting, chewing, nodding, ankle-showing spinster! She can hold a shaving mug. But have them keep her out of my sight!"

The shaving process was all over before Joan came back, and, although Webster was very tired, he was also very exultant.

"Come here a minute," he whispered mysteriously. "I want to tell you something, to whisper."

She went close to him and laid her ear to his lips. Her cheek brushed his, and he folded his great hands over her with some assurance, and she felt refreshed by the fragrance of the alluring mannish cosmetics. Very gently he rubbed his nicely shaven cheek against hers.

She broke away, and he did not try to hold her. She flushed, all over her neck and up to her wavy hair. A slow red crept up over his face from which the old-time shielding coat of tan was gone.

"How nice you smell!" she cried lamely.

"Smell! But isn't that 'the skin you love to touch'? Has little sawbones a cheek equal to mine?"

"How do I know?"

"But"—jealously—"hasn't some one held you like that before?"

"Do you suppose you are the only patient I ever had who had arms?"

"But they were sick, weren't they?"

"You are sick, aren't you?"

"But there is nothing the matter with my arms."

"There are a lot of patients who have nothing the matter with their arms."

"But are you sure you tried to get away?"

Here she gave him a look that made him shrivel till he envied the size and dignity of the little doctor; a look that fairly made him squirm away down to his feet and away off into the bedding and out into the cold unknown at the foot of the bed.

"Oh, I say!" he cried. But she was crying and putting space between them until she reached the farthest corner by the window, where she crept into a big chair and sobbed softly, but audibly. "Do you want me to get out of this bed?" he hissed.

"I don't care what you do!"

"Just what would happen if I should get out of bed?"

"You might try it and see!"

"Don't you care any longer what becomes of me?"

"Any longer?"

"Don't you take at least a professional interest in the welfare of your patients?"

"Most of them, when they are worth while."

There was a long pause, with no sound save her sobbing. He broke the silence.

"Are'n't you lonesome away out there?"

"Lonesome! I only wish I could get a chance to see if I *could* be lonesome! There is absolutely no chance for a moment's privacy in this place!"

There was a longer silence. Even her sobbing had ceased. He could not see her. He stood it as long as he could; then he said: "I wonder if the doctors would blame you, or my people

hold you responsible in any way if they found you sitting away off there, and me in a chill."

Frightened by the dread word, she rose quickly.

"Are you chilly?" she asked.

"I never felt so cold in my life!"

She started toward him, but was stopped by the policeman, who had come in through the window. Webster wondered why she did not come to him; then he saw a strange figure between him and the window—the policeman!

So that was what made that window so popular! He did not admire her choice, but then—oh, well—what the— Then he heard the man's voice and the additional burr in it told plainly where he had found the courage for this coup. He also heard Joan's low, intense voice ordering him from the room.

It was then that Webster had his chill. He shivered all over. Should he ring his bell? If he did so, it might be some little time before any one came, for they knew he had a nurse with him. There was a sound of some kind of quiet scuffling—a nurse would be quiet if some one were killing her; she would not want to disturb her patients. If only there were something he could do without disturbing the whole place! In that far corner by the window the sound grew not louder, but more intense.

He could not see them now; then he saw them plainly. She was darting first one way and then the other to avoid her pursuer, who was a little closer to her each time.

"Damn him! If he lays a hand on her," he sobbed, "I'll—kill—him—as quick as I would a rat! When—I—get—out of here! Get out? I must get out now!"

He tried to get out of bed, struggling madly against the weakness which followed a stinging clutch of pain in his

side. When next he glanced at the corner, the policeman had hold of the nurse; but he was not having it all his own way. It is not an easy thing to kiss a girl who is determined not to be kissed. Webster saw a pair of strong young arms fighting madly; a frightened white face turned stiffly away.

"God bless her!" he said. "Isn't she a peach, I ask you?"

As the struggle progressed, there was no longer left in the man any fancy to kiss a pretty mouth; there was no longer any lure in the figure he was trying to hold; there was nothing left but a grim determination to conquer a resisting force, to do the forbidden thing.

As Webster watched frantically, his reluctant hand at last on the buzzer, there came a God-given thought, and he reached a searching hand among the bottles and tumblers near him, and his fingers closed at last around something infinitely precious, and he looked again at the lighted space by the window. Suddenly everything swayed, and he saw red; then his vision cleared and he prayed silently for strength for just one minute.

The officer had Joan in his arms now; but he had yet to use both hands to keep her there. Webster raised himself slowly on to his right elbow, and waited with what patience he could for the dizziness to wear off. Then, ever so gently he swung his left hand back. It hit the wall; there was no room. He pushed steadily with his left hand and foot, and little by little the wall receded and at last his arm swung free.

The policeman now held both Joan's arms with one of his, and with his other hand he held her head as in a vise. She thought that all was lost and that the ugly mouth must touch hers; she even waited for the dreaded contact, to have it over, and opened wild eyes to see Webster in some sort of contor-

tion, poised on his right elbow, his left arm swung free. She saw something coming toward her and closed her eyes.

The ball moaned under her jaw and crashed into the massive muscles of the wrist that held her throat. Webster, watching in an agony of fear that her head might move an inch, saw the ball hit its mark, strike the nearest wall, fly across the corner against the opposite wall, where gravity tried to take care of it, and it rolled over the foot of the staggered bully, and zipped back on its homeward way. Joan opened her eyes again just in time to see a long arm reach out and gather it in home.

So suddenly had Joan been released, that she almost fell to the floor, but she quickly recovered her balance and her senses and started toward her patient. The policeman stared, open-mouthed. Something had burned his wrist, and it might as well be dead for any feeling there was in it. Stupidly he followed after Joan.

"Whut's that!" he gasped.

"A baseball!" said Joan, giggling hysterically.

"Who in hell t'rew it?"

"My patient."

"Where is he, in bed there? I'll make him a patient fer the rest of his loife! Oi'll teach him not to strike an officer of the law!" He lumbered heavily across the room; but she was ahead of him and bent over her patient suddenly, taking the great left hand tenderly in both her own.

"Are you chilly now?"

"Not any more! I'd have tried for his jaw if I hadn't been afraid of hitting the window and cutting you."

"Did you hurt your side?"

"I felt it a little; but that wasn't much of a throw." He looked up at the policeman, who now towered threateningly above him, and he looked ugly, as he pushed the sheltering figure of his nurse away. She reached for the buzzer, but he shook his head.

"What do you want?" he asked quietly.

But the policeman's countenance had changed comically. He looked questioningly at the prostrate figure before him, his mind clearing slowly.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"My name is Webster."

The policeman's face lighted and a rapt look crept into his eyes.

"Oh, now! Not 'Long' Webster, the great sout'paw! Well, what d'ye know about that? Was it you all the toime? Sure, if Oi had known who it wuz, Oi wouldn't 'ave thought of inty-ferin' wid yer swateheart!"

"How's your wrist?"

"Me wrist will heal. Sure an' Oi wouldn't swap it for promotion itself—Oi'm thot proud to be on sich intimate terms wid yez! But Oi must be goin' back or they moight be disorder on the block. Oi've watched youse for hours, and Oi've loved youse loike a brother." Here he shed maudlin tears as he went toward the window and his duty.

Webster turned toward his nurse. They were both ill at ease.

"Well, so you were afraid the big stiff would hurt me! Would you care much?"

"Of course, we are always more or less interested in our patients."

"I understand all that. What I am trying to find out now concerns this particular patient only. Which is it with me now, honest—'more,' or 'less'?"

"Must I tell the truth?"

"Don't you want to? A great deal depends on it."

"It is 'more.'"

"That's bully! Come here now. Will it hurt me to reach like this, or do you think I have had exercise enough for to-day? Now that we are engaged, and I have had a shave, we may as well finish it up."

"Finish it up?"

"Must I show you?"

"I never was engaged before."

"I should hope not!"

"You must lie still!"

"Then you must come nearer."

As she slowly drew nearer, all his bravado and assurance fell from him like a coat of mail, and he was as defenseless as she. He took her face between his palms and looked at her straight and long, his blue eyes reading her face as those of a child might. Then, as she blushed and tried to hide her face, he, in very pity of her sweet shame, drew her face down and kissed her.

After a while, he said:

"Of course, I always thought that some day I might find a sweet girl, but I never dreamed I would find one anything like you."

"I never imagined a great big man like you would be so gentle."

"That ridiculous cap makes me laugh. It is becoming and tantalizing, if that is why you wear it; but it does not cover up your hair; it just makes a feller want to take it off, so he can see your hair—you have such nice hair! I noticed it in the sunlight that morning when you were asleep, and I thought it was the prettiest sight I had ever seen."

That night, when he was eating his supper, he said:

"When can I have some good old Boston baked beans?"

"Sa—Sunday morning."

"Why not Saturday night?"

"You couldn't have them at night the first time."

"Can you bake beans, good ones?"

"As good as are provided."

"I can provide good ones."

"I can bake them."

"You are going to have a chance, my little old dear! You leave here when I do. I shall need a nurse for some time. Darling, you like baseball, really?"

"Crazy about it!"

"Good! Do you go very often?"

"I have been too busy, and there was no one to take me."

"We'll soon remedy that. You shall camp on the stadium. You understand it a little?"

"I understand it a lot, and what I don't know, you can tell me."

"I should say I could! I know a diamond that will have more intimately to do with your little southpaw than it will with mine, and I'll see to it the

minute I get out of here. Now, put out an 'Engaged' sign, can't you? No one would walk in over that, would they? What? Not in college? Isn't there some way of sporting your oak in this place? Lock the door, then; tell them I'm asleep or dead; that I'm having a bath or a fit; anything! I'm going to kiss you a thousand times, more or less, probably more, singled and doubled, and I don't want too many rooters in the grand stand!"



DUSK IN THE CITY

WAITING, dear, for the sound of your footsteps ringing
 Down the street, when the curtain of dusk hangs low;
 Waiting, dear, with the heart and soul of me singing,
 While through the dark the vague lights come and go.
 Waiting, dear, with my hands outstretched in the gloaming—
 Drowsy the traffic sounds as a great bee's hum!—
 Dear, in the city parks the birds are homing.
 When will you come?

All through the day I have done my tasks, and my laughter
 Ran ahead of my work like a silver stream;
 Ran ahead toward the night, and I, following after,
 Feeling the warmth of the sun as a pleasant dream.
 Only the dark, that lay ahead of the hours,
 Only the dark seemed real and close and true;
 Only the dark when the lights spring up like flowers,
 Painting a path for you!

How can I tell your footsteps when throngs are pressing
 Down each crowded way, when the vague sounds creep
 Up to my waiting ears? It is not all guessing—
 Dear, I know! And my glad heart wakes from sleep,
 Wakes with a light that is like a star in the gloaming,
 Wakes with a song like the breeze in a fragrant tree.
 Dear, in the city parks the birds are homing.
 When will you come to me?

MARGARET E. SANGSTER.



More Super-Women

By Anice Terhune

Lady Morgan:

"The Wild Irish Girl,"

Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,
Where they are gone, not yet this year,
Except with this for an overword—
But where are the snows of yesteryear?
—*Ballad of Dead Ladies.*

I PROTEST against dates! What has a woman got to do with dates?" cried an odd-looking little wisp of femininity, wielding an enormous green fan.

She was the center of a throng at a reception in Dublin, in the year 1815.

"Sydney, Lady Morgan," as she always called herself, resented hotly any attempts on the part of her friends to find out her age. Hence this laughing evasion to her crowd of Dublin admirers. Nor did she ever reveal the exact date of her birth. She was absurdly sensitive about it, and always claimed that it was no one's business.

Her unsparing critic and enemy, Croker, took a mean revenge on Sydney for this by invariably speaking of her as "Miss Owenson of the Eighteenth Century."

In spite of Sydney's determination to remain forever a mystery, she admits that she was "ushered into the world by the ringing of bells and the singing of carols," early one frosty Christmas morning—somewhere around the year 1777—which probably means that she was really born several years earlier.

Her father was originally an Irish

land steward, Mac Owen. Later, he changed his name to Owenson—names and dates alike being adjustable in that merry Irish family. Owenson became stage-struck and threw up everything to try his luck as an actor.

He appeared in London in "Tamerlane," and succeeded well enough to be dubbed, "Mr. Owenson, the great London actor."

While starring in the provinces, he met and fell in love with a Miss Hill. Both were romantic, so they decided to elope. They lived partly in London, partly in Dublin; and little Sydney was born on shipboard, midway between Holyhead and Dublin.

She does not hesitate to claim a part of the Christmas celebration of that day as her very own; for she says:

"In the hour when I first drew breath, the world took part—in the hour and the day!"

A tiny, fragile woman, slightly deformed, she is a most remarkable example of what a super-woman can do, unaided, except by her own tact and the amazing energy of her brain.

Sydney was brought up among actors, and learned her first letters from a playbill. She was the pet of the greenroom from the time she began to toddle about. Her loud, gay laugh, was often heard in front of the curtain as she stood in the wings.

Her love of fun, which she kept as long as she lived, served to make life joyous, for her father's actor friends, and gave little hint that the girl was one day to become a prominent figure in the most "polite" neighborhood of London, and to take her stand among the most lettered and famous aristocracy in the world, at a time when the literary firmament was glittering with stars.

As a scholar, she promised very little. She was too fond of a good time to enjoy settling down to a dull lesson book. Her mother tried hard to teach her to read, but it was uphill work. Yet, long before she could read a line, her mind was stored with hymns, poems, Irish ballads, pages of Shakespeare, and scraps of knowledge which she had picked up no one knows where or how.

Finally, in despair, her mother relinquished Sydney's education. The child was turned over to Thomas Dermody, known as "The Poor Scholar," who later became a literary lion, though a profligate one, and was called "The Irish Chatterton."

Dermody willingly undertook the burden of Sydney's schooling. But, at the first lesson, the small super-woman's funny little smile found its way into his heart, and he was as wax in her hands. Shamelessly she twisted him around her finger; but, eventually, she learned to read, and even to write.

Her mother died early, and Sydney lavished all the wealth of her warm, loving nature on her father and her younger sister, Olivia.

One day, when Sydney was stumbling through a music lesson in such a way as to cause her long-suffering teacher acute anguish, Mr. Owenson walked into the room. Eying his willful little girl sadly, and lifting his cloak to show the shabby sleeve underneath, he said:

"Daughter, I am going around in rags to give you an education. Do you think you are playing the game fairly with me?"

Quick, remorseful tears rushed in Sydney's eyes. Jumping up and flinging her arms around her father's neck, she gave him a bearlike hug.

"I'll never be so thoughtless again!" she murmured contritely.

She kept her word. From that day she became a model pupil.

Her beloved father was always falling into hard luck; and so, as soon as she was fitted for it, Sydney took a position as governess with a Mrs. Featherstone.

Her fascinating ways caused the whole family to fall in love with her. Mrs. Featherstone soon found her hands full. Nearly every eligible young man in the county was paying court to the little governess, and haunting the house for a sound of her laugh or a glance from her mockingly winsome eyes.

Sydney herself was having a gorgeous time! She had become so necessary to Mrs. Featherstone that that good lady did not feel like sending her away. The children adored her; the servants worshiped her. Her social gifts made her a most valuable adjunct to the Featherstone parties. But the lovers were a nuisance. So Mrs. Featherstone shut up her country home and moved the family to town.

Here, things soon became even more exciting. Sydney was not pretty, but she could not help attracting attention; and she did not mind getting all the fun out of life that came her way. Mrs. Featherstone soon found that she had jumped from frying pan to fire.

Sydney's mind was not all on having a good time, however. Young and busy as she was, she had already written her first book, and she wanted to find a publisher for it. She knew absolutely nothing about publishers, and she would have died rather than confess to her relatives or associates that she was a writer. So she went secretly about the business of getting her first-born brain-child a reading.

She borrowed the cook's hat and cloak, and, thus disguised, made her way to the door of what she supposed was a publishing house, her roll of manuscript, tied with a rose-colored ribbon, tucked under her arm.

Her knock was answered by a flashy young yeoman in full uniform, with a musket on his shoulder.

"Flinging the door wide, he marched straight up to me," she writes, "whistling 'The Irish Volunteers.' Then he chucked me under the chin—and filled me from the crown to the toe full of direst cruelty! I could have murdered him!"

Evidently her Irish temper was up, and she treated him to a tongue lashing; for the tête-à-tête was suddenly interrupted by another voice:

"Why ain't ye off, Jim?" it cried. "The lawyers' corps marched an hour ago!"

And a middle-aged man in a towering rage burst on the scene. His face was half shaven, and he clutched a foamy razor. With a sidelong glance at Sydney, he shouted:

"Off wid ye now, like a skyrocket!" Then he turned to the indignant girl:

"What are ye doin' here, little miss?" he asked.

Sydney swallowed her wrath and lifted her smoldering eyes to the face above her.

"I want to sell a book, please," she said primly.

"To sell a book, dearie?" said the man, ogling her admiringly.

"Yes. The name of it is 'St. Clair.'"

"I've nothing to do with church books nor sermons nor tracts, as I judge by the title yours is," was his hurried response.

"No, sir," went on Sydney bravely, "it's one of sentiment, after the manner of Werther."

"Never heard of him," said her host. "I'm not a publisher."

Sydney shot up out of her chair with

flaming cheeks and tried to make a dignified exit; but she was very young, and, before she got to the door, the tears came.

Instantly her bluff companion was melted into kindness.

"There, there!" he soothed. "Don't cry! What's your name?"

"My father is Mr. Owenson of the Theater Royal," said Sydney tremulously.

Thereupon her host was all smiles and affability.

"Come right into the parlor and have breakfast," he urged, finding himself swiftly falling under Sydney's spell.

"I don't want breakfast," she said firmly. "I want a publisher."

Before he knew what he was about, the bewildered man had been hypnotized into taking her to a publisher—a real one this time—Brown, of Grafton Street.

She was allowed to leave her book; but she heard nothing from it thereafter.

One day she visited a sick friend and found her reading a new novel—"St. Clair." She rushed to her publishers. There she was told that she had omitted to leave her address on her first call. As pay for the book, they gave her four copies of it! Profiteering was a good game, even in those days, it seems!

From then on, Sydney began to spread her literary wings. She was not ready to be bothered with lovers, and, as they flocked persistently around her, she left the protesting Mrs. Featherstone and became governess in Mrs. Crawford's family, in the north of Ireland.

"Here," she said to herself, "I can be quiet and write!"

But the super-woman was not destined to be quiet. She danced well, sang Irish songs to the accompaniment of her harp, and was so absolutely charming that she was flattered and made love to by all the men she met.

By this time, too, she had learned

that an even disposition is a tremendous asset, and she kept her temper under control with astonishing success.

"You know, one of my maxims is never to let anything in the world ruffle my temper," she once said. "And by this means I keep others good-natured."

Among all her adorers at this time, Francis Crossley stands out as the most ardent. He was always begging Sydney to marry him, and his wild passion for her carried him to tremendous lengths. He even copied, by hand, the six volumes of her next novel, "The Novice of St. Dominic," for her; which is certainly a proof of his devotion. Yet, after this, Sydney was hard-hearted enough to refuse him, and set off for London with the carefully copied book in her trunk.

The trip, in those days, was, at best, a long and perilous one; and Sydney had so little money that she was forced to travel in the least expensive way. On the last stage of her journey, she bobbed about on the top of a rollicking London coach. When they finally put her off at Lad's Lane, she was so tired that she sat down on her trunk and fell fast asleep.

Curled up pathetically, and looking like a small, drowsy kitten, she attracted the attention of a gentleman, Quentin Dick. With true gallantry, he tiptoed away and found a servant, with whom he left a sum of money and instructions to "see that she was properly taken care of."

From this charming beginning, a warm friendship sprang up between the girl and Dick. Naughty Sydney could not resist flirting; and Dick went further and put his heart in her keeping. The affair flourished merrily for a while, but Dick got nothing but a broken heart for his pains.

All this happened afterward, however. On the day Sydney came to London, she thought only of publish-

ers. Her "wagon was hitched to a star." She was determined to become a great novelist. So she took her six volumes, and made her way through the streets to a publishing house. Here, she so charmed the publisher that he not only took her book unread, but paid her at once for it, what was to her a royal sum.

Sydney's smile so bemused the man, that he, too, prostrated himself at her feet. He rushed around and found lodgings for her. He hired some one to cut down the six volumes to four. He did everything mortal man could do, to win her favor. But, Sydney had nothing but gratitude to lavish on him.

Feeling like a millionaire, with the money from her book, she joyously sent nearly all of it to her father, saving out only enough to buy herself a coveted "Irish harp made by Egan, and a black, fashionable cloak."

She returned to Ireland a successful author, with orders for more novels. She set to work feverishly on the book that gave her her first real fame: "The Wild Irish Girl," in which she put so much of herself that the title became henceforth her nickname.

Her publishers tried to monopolize her; but she was too clever for them. She wrote to a rival firm. The result was that she got fifteen hundred dollars for the book. It was a brilliant success, and Sydney was "made." She heaved a sigh of happiness and looked around for more worlds to conquer.

About this time, Sydney met Richard Everard, who fell violently in love with her. Just wherein her charm lay, no one seems to know; but that she was irresistibly alluring, when she chose to be—and generally, she chose—there is no denying.

She did not want Richard. He was idle and without money or profession. But, for some reason, his father did not wish him to marry her; and Sydney was not used to being undesired.

So she encouraged Richard, in order to tease his father. Finally, things came to such a pass that the elder Everard called to see Sydney. To his horror, he found himself falling as deeply in love with the super-woman as was his son. Soon he forgot all about the son, and pleaded his own cause, right valiantly, on his middle-aged knees. Sydney laughed her merry, infectious laugh, and ordered him to get up and go about his business.

In spite of his wounded feelings, he could not help continuing to love the little flirt; and they became firm friends and corresponded for years. The father even used to beg her to try to influence his son to live a better life; which she doubtless was very glad to do—after her own fashion.

Between the periods of tremendous work on her novels, Sydney led a gay life, paying visits among her friends, and gathering fresh material. These visits were always triumphal pilgrimages, for Sydney had now become the fashion.

She constantly helped her father and sister, and produced an opera, so that her father could play in it. Then she married her sister to a wealthy man.

At a house party Sydney met the great Sir Charles Ormsby, whom she called "the ugliest fellow and the most accomplished gentleman in Dublin."

They were much attracted to each other at once; and, for a while, Sydney fancied herself in love. The affair lasted a long time; but, although the lover did everything he could to win Sydney as his wife, she steadfastly refused to marry him.

To add to the variety of her life, she had spicy quarrels with her publishers every now and then, and played them off against each other. *The Quarterly* attacked her in bitter reviews; but her popularity steadily increased, in spite of her enemies.

Among her fondest admirers at this time were Thomas Moore and Byron.

They loved her and her work. She worshiped their work and was deaf to their love.

She visited her friend Lady Abercorn in the north of Ireland, and so fascinated every one that the Abercorns besought her to live with them and amuse them. She accepted the invitation. It was a stately home; and here Sydney met, she declared, "the greatest ones of the earth."

The Abercorns took her to London. She sold another book, for a good sum. She was doubly happy. All the good things of life fell into her lap. Sir Thomas Lawrence painted her portrait—and made futile love to her. She was presented to the Princess of Wales, and dined with her highness.

But, in time she wearied of the Abercorns. They left much to be desired; and Sydney found it somewhat of a strain to be always "the life of the party." Struggles, jealousies, flatteries, temptations, and lying stories at length became too much, even for her elastic disposition. She left the Abercorns and went to live at Bacon's Court.

One good turn the Abercorns had done to her, however. They had introduced their physician, young Doctor Charles Morgan, to her. He was a widower, handsome and accomplished, and with a good income. Sydney was five or six years older than he, but he lost no time in swearing eternal devotion to her, and begging her to marry him.

"Barring his wild, unfounded love for me," wrote Sydney, "the creature is perfection—the most manly. I had almost said most daring tone of mind, united to more goodness of heart and disposition than I ever met within a human being. Even in this circle, where all is acquirement and accomplishment, it is confessed that his versatility is unrivaled. There is scarcely an art or science he has not cultivated with success, and the resources of his mind are limitless. His manners are too English

to be popular with the Irish, and, although he is reckoned a handsome man, it is not that sort of thing which, if I were to choose for beauty, I would select. It is too good! A little diablerie would make me wildly in love with him!"

In spite of his being "too good," however, Sydney and he were engaged before long.

The Duke of Richmond, himself devoted to Sydney, used his influence to make Morgan a baronet, out of compliment to her. Morgan did not wish for the added dignity; but Sydney told him she was not going to assume the cares of matrimony for a mere "Mrs.," when "Lady" was right within her grasp; so Morgan meekly bent his knee and the viceregal sword was laid across his shoulder.

Still, Sydney delayed the wedding. She dearly loved her betrothed; but she was very sure of him, and she was having a tremendously good time. She delayed and temporized until the Abercorns, who felt responsible for the match, became very angry; and so did the long-suffering lover.

They resolved to play a trick on her.

She was invited to the Abercorns' for a short visit. As it was to be short, she accepted. The morning after her arrival, she was sitting by her bedroom fire in wrapper and slippers, when Lady Abercorn tapped at the door.

"You must come upstairs directly," she said, "just as you are—and be married!"

Before she realized that her hostess was serious, she was led by the arm into Lady Abercorn's dressing room, and confronted by Morgan and a clergyman. There was no chance to escape. So, with her accustomed good humor, she made the best of it, and was married hard and fast before she had a chance to think.

By this time she had twenty-five thousand dollars saved from the pro-

ceeds of her books; and she kept exclusive control over all future earnings. She longed for a home of her own, so they took a bijou house in Kildare Street, Dublin. It became the Mecca of the literary and the fashionable world. Sydney's books marked one success after another. She was always fighting with publishers—and getting the best of them—and playing with her friends.

She held mimic court in Kildare Street, season after season. All the wit, rank, beauty, and intellect of Dublin were found in her two small drawing-rooms on her assembly nights. It was the center around which the Liberal party rallied; but all parties and all creeds were welcome.

No dinner at the viceregal lodge was complete without the gay presence of "The Wild Irish Girl."

She began to grow old. But, game to the last, she kept up a semblance of youth long after youth had fled. Her odd appearance, her audacity of dress, amused people almost as much as her ready flow of wit.

"Fancy a little, slightly deformed woman of between fifty and sixty," writes a chronicler, "in a girlish, white muslin dress and green sash! Nothing could equal my astonishment, when the celebrated authoress, *in propria persona*, stood before me!

"She certainly formed a strange picture in the midst of that dazzling scene of beauty and splendor. Every female present wore feathers and trains, but Lady Morgan scorned both.

"Hardly more than four feet high, with a slightly curved spine, uneven shoulders and eyes, she glided about in a close-cropped wig, bound by a filet or solid band of gold; her face all animation, with a witty word for everybody.

"I afterward saw her in the dress circle at the theater. She was cheered enthusiastically when she entered. Her dress was different, but just as queer.

She had a red Celtic cloak, fastened by an Irish Tara brooch, which gave her a gorgeous, picturesque appearance."

Later, she and Sir Charles moved to London, where her triumphs continued. But she was never too busy to give a helping hand or to welcome strangers.

In 1843, her husband died. She was heartbroken, and for a long time could not refer to him.

"So ends my life," was all she said.

In the course of years, her buoyant temperament asserted itself and she plunged back into the gay world again.

"I reel on!" she said. "I return to my desolate home and all the horrors of sobriety. The world is my gin or opium. I take it for a few hours per diem—excitement, intoxication, absence!"

Her eyesight failed, but she still held receptions with a spirit and energy undiminished. She dictated in the morning, and received visitors in the afternoon.

On St. Patrick's Day, 1859, she gave a musicale, the gayest she had had in a

long time. It was her last—for on that day she caught a cold which caused her death.

"Probably no woman has ever achieved greater literary and social triumphs," says Blackburne. "Vain and egotistical she was; but she would have been more than mortal, otherwise. Flattered, caressed, adored, always persuaded she was an oracle, she enjoyed it all. Yet she had an enormous fund of common sense. She never went in debt and was persistently industrious.

The keynote to her character is best expressed in her own words:

"I value my industry more than my genius; because the latter I owe merely to my organism, while the former is a virtue of my own making."

You see, clever as she was, Sydney had not the slightest idea as to the secret of her own success. In smug, copy-book style, she praises those two stodgy virtues, industry and genius. She did not know that she owed far less to them than to a magical charm as oddly elusive as a humming bird's.



METROPOLIS

TORN petal in the torrent of the street,
 She passes—wan, a something strange and frayed.
 Moved by the human flood, whose turgid grade
 Tosses her, froth, where chance and changes beat.
 She pauses not; and in her look the heat
 Of answer to her kindred lies dismayed.
 Not in their millions finds she any aid
 To guard and help her, fearful in defeat.

What was the wind that whirled her from her stem
 To flutter rootless in this churning tide?
 To what dark karma does this flood condemn
 Her broken bloom? Or will she, gathering pride,
 Rise to new budding; fling down roots through them—
 These waves that buffet—and their strength deride?

LOUISE GEBHARD CANN.



They'll Do the Same Thing Over

By Clement Wood
Author of "Whom the Sea Loves," etc.

THE gods are good! John Meredith blessed them in his heart.

A moment before, no words had been sharp enough to frame his wrath against them. A long morning wasted! Endless scrambles up quarreling rapids to tantalizing pools of stillness, where no footprint showed, and the wise old trout would be sure to be quartered for the summer; the careful choice of the fly; the skillful whirl of the line; the singing of the reel—and not the feeblest nibble!

Then, etched in bronze against the sheer green of the leaves, he saw—the girl. She was at the higher end of a stretch of fussy water, her back toward him, evidently watching the pool that must lie above. She had not seen him—yet. Slim bronze boots, a yellow-brownish outing dress, bronzed hair, a cheek that had borrowed some color from sun and hair—he could see only a suggestion of her profile. But, this was enough to urge him, striding through rock and spray, to the top of the rise.

His boot clattered with exaggerated emphasis against a loose rock, to attract her attention. She did not turn; she continued to play her line.

"I beg your pardon——" he tried deferentially.

Two widened eyes took him in.

"I'm not offended," she responded mildly, the eyes returning to the pool.

"Er—I mean, for disturbing you; poaching, as it were."

"As it isn't," she countered quietly. "It isn't *my* pool! My fondest hope owns merely one of the fish!"

Why wouldn't she waste a second glance on him? Evidently she was neither impressed nor afraid of him.

Yet, she should have been both. For a man on a fishing trip is impressive—and dangerous. A woman seeks food, or to reduce her figure—or her rouge bill—when she takes to brook or field; she thinks of the prey in terms of ounces, market prices, a broiled or roasted triumph. A man hunts or fishes as his first ancestors did; the lust to chase, to capture, scorches him on. If a pretty woman crosses the trail, the aim is diverted, but the hunt continues. She becomes both audience and aim, gallery and goal. Like many a married man, John Meredith enjoyed fishing—and hunting; the zest of the chase, the thrill of the capture.

These thoughts played tag in his mind, as he stood observing the feminine sportsman's attempts to waken and lure the watchful life below. The slim straightness of the left arm, gripping the rod, the bewitching curve of elbow and wrist, guarding the reel—he could not take either eye from them.

A half hour tiptoed past. Fishing is silent sport, even among acquaintances.

One of the girl's hairpins, whose gradual slipping had piqued Meredith's interest for at least five minutes, splashed into the water. A treasury of bronze hair began to slide neckward. A petulant frown dimpled her forehead. She looked in distaste at the reel, evidently on strike; her eyes hunted a place to lay the rod; she meditated calling in the futile fly.

"I'll hold it."

She retired up the bank, patting the unruly coiffure into its old alluring shapeliness.

And then—as if pat on a cue—it happened. A swish, a pull on the line, a quick jerk to the side, the glint of a funny periscope slicing the surface, and then the shrill whanging of the reel, as the cord spun taut, clear across the surprised pool.

"Oh! Look out!" Her tone was sharp warning.

He had seen the ledge at the same instant, and circled up the rocky edge of the pool, clearing the craggy obstruction, which might saw through the line. The trout was done with its first rush now, and darted jerkily up and down the farther stretch of water, uncertain which way escape lay. Meredith reeled in slowly—slowly.

Zip! Zowie! It was away again, churning the surface like a rising hydroplane. It twisted and curvetted along the top, leaping, hurdling viciously. The substitute fisherman coddled it tenderly, with constant reminders that the trout was awaited at home. It rested again; the inevitable recall began. Furious now, the peevish king of the ripples swished to the pool's farther end, where irregular willow roots twisted, like dank fingers, out of the water. It mustn't be allowed to tie up in there; Meredith reined promptly in. The fish bucked and cavorted, with mighty heaves, which threatened every moment to snap the slim cord. With patient skill, the angler

nursed his prey, letting the line respond to each desperate gesture for release.

The girl watched the struggle with radiant eyes. Closer and closer to him she crept, until she had squatted right beside. Her fingers played nervously with the landing net.

A sudden swerve brought the fish, still fighting, into clear water just below.

"What a beauty!" she sighed ecstatically.

This time it was the man who did not answer.

It had been fifteen minutes now; the man's arms ached from the strain; he grunted at each forlorn dash of the hooked fighter. Shorter and shorter became the unwound stretch of line.

"Now!" he exhaled softly.

Kneeling on a damp stone, she scooped skillfully. The unbelievable had happened. They had the fish!

For a minute they knelt side by side, the speckled knight in silver squirming and gasping in the unobserved net. Their eyes met honestly, their gazes locked—neither was in a hurry to look away.

They had caught something.

II.

A deft twitch extracted the hook.

"Five pounds, at the least!" he mused.

"You seem certain."

He grinned indefinitely.

"It's obvious. Rather large scales."

A pensive sigh tightened her lips.

"You get a weigh with that!"

A grateful beam rewarded her.

"It's one o'clock," he announced, out of a clear sky, smiling.

"Your whole morning's haul?" She speculated toward his slack knapsack.

"Mine? Your line caught him."

"It was your skill."

"Your rod."

"But your arm."

A triumphant gesture.

"Your pool. Here first."

"Half and half, then." She observed the unbisected fish, as if she were Miss Solomon deciding between conflicting mothers, for the precious privilege of keeping a twice-claimed infant on a three-hour bottle schedule. "I'll have the head end; trout's cheeks are delicious."

He looked longingly—not at the fish. "Checks are."

Disregarding his gaze:

"That's too bad! You see, there's only one cheek end. And if both of us—"

"Why, Miss—er—"

"Not 'Miss'; I'm married."

"I would never have guessed it!" he lied gracefully. All experience had taught that the prettier they are, the more married they turn out to be.

She looked at him sideways. How provocative long eyelashes were! At last she spoke.

"I knew you were married, from the first."

"Do I look as—bad as that?"

"You look good—in the moral sense, I mean."

"What depressing information!"

"Well behaved." She ignored him wickedly. "The sort of man who would never—"

"It's one o'clock," he said, crisply repeating his original remark. "I'm hungry. Perhaps you are. It's a long, long way to the inn. We have one fish, owned jointly. Somewhere, not too far away, is my car. I have bacon there. A skillet. Bread, for toasting. A coffeepot."

"Mine's in a thermos," she volunteered.

"Shall we lunch together, Mrs.—"

"I don't feel married," she confessed. "I'd be delighted to!"

"I must call you something, you Miss—or Mrs.—of mystery! I shall call you June," in mock pompousness.

"Merry June or Mary Jane—what difference? Let's see! June is rare."

"June is some months out of date," he dallied. "I feel as if lunch were. Let's round up the provender."

They returned together from the jaunt, arms burdened. She added her stock to his pile. Meanwhile, he persuaded a fire out of coy pine needles and windfall branches. The tiny coffeepot chirped a deceptive prelude, as if it were already boiling. Meredith cleaned the fish.

He came back from the brook below the pool, hands, case knife, and trout spick-and-spanly dripping. He relieved her of the smoking skillet; the fish crackled and sputtered in the sizzling bacon fat.

"Do you know, June, you are the image of a girl I once knew—six years ago. Except that she was younger."

"Is my age as apparent as—as a horse's?" She laughed, the pearl of her teeth showing.

"Well—"

"Did you like her?"

"I was foolish about her," he corrected grimly. "I married her."

"Poor girl!" she pondered absently. Meredith glared.

"Not that," she hastened to add. "Poor, because you think of how she looked six years ago, instead of—"

"But I'm looking at you now."

"'Inconstancy, thy name is—'"

"The greatest constancy is to hold fervently to one love—at a time."

"You were speaking of me and this girl you once knew," she caught him up, smiling. "Your wife—still, I presume."

He nodded.

"Is she—nice?"

"Are wives—nice? But—she is. And she's a beauty!" thoughtfully.

The girl bowed at the implied compliment.

"Very, very jealous," he added, impressively, "and the usual lack of harmony—in some things."

"Jealousy's a compliment to you. The woman must believe you're worth it!

This lack of harmony—why must married people forget that they are, and must remain, two—despite all the words in the world?" She came close. "Give me that pan!"

Meekly he obeyed; the meek shall inherit the dinner, he reflected.

"Trust a man to scorch things, every time!" She flipped the fish skillfully; it sizzled afresh.

"It's not really burned. I like the charred taste," trying out a double defense.

She did not dignify this with an answer.

"You talk, Lady June, as an authority. What's *your* husband like, for instance?"

"Well—unlike you, for one thing," she began.

"That might be a compliment."

A gentle laugh answered him.

"I'd never suspect him of lunching in the woods with a woman he called 'June.'"

"But—the provocation! Could he resist—"

"He is a man. Then—I like him quite a lot. More and more. Women do, somehow. Then, also, he's very, very jealous."

"With reason?"

"My dear—John Meredith, you said it was?—he has no reason, of course; except myself."

"Reason enough for anything!"

She turned away, removing the cooked fish from the flame. There was a tremor in her voice as she answered; her eye was too radiant—a star shining through mist.

"Convince *him* of that!"

"My dear child! He's a brute, if he doesn't know it! Anyway, it's not my part. You—a man would have to love you—elope with you—even endure marriage with you!"

"These words, John Meredith, to a respectable married woman!" She

laughed gayly. "Are you as disillusioned as you sound?"

"I was praising you, remember. 'Illusioned,' do you mean?"

"Let's eat! Paper napkin—sugar—treat it precious! Here's the agate cup—toast—salt. And, now, my lord, a prime helping of fresh, five-pound mountain trout, done to a t-u-r-n."

He reached for the salt, and so did she. His hand must have been very stupid; could it have thought that the saltshaker had five cool fingers, and needed to be held so long, or so tightly?

III.

Her shimmering eyes met his at last, as he slid unhurried fingers away. A deepened rose woke in her sun-bronzed cheeks.

"That's not in the game, John Meredith."

"I couldn't help it!"

"No; men can't," she reflected.

"Should I have let you? Doesn't it—spoil things?"

"Everything tastes delightful," he assured her seriously, diving into the fish. "You taste pine needles and—and—and mountain dragon flies. Gorgeous!"

A demure smile flickered around her eyes, as she bent to her plate. They finished the meal in silence.

She dried the things, after he had washed them in the stream. His blood pounded hotly, as her head leaned close to his, and the poaching tendrils of her hair tingled against his cheek. But he did not take her hand the second time.

"It must be dreadfully late. We must say good-by," she fretted.

John Meredith flung discretion to the mountain winds. "No! We must never say that!"

Her lips opened in startled protest.

"Listen, Lady June. Don't think I'm silly, but—I'm madly in love with you! Love at first, second, third, a thousandth

sight—I've looked at you this morning more than a thousand times." He caught the hand purposely at last; she felt the urgent pressure pulling her toward him.

"Don't—don't!"

"Why?" he exclaimed triumphantly, as her shoulder touched his. Watching her face, he did not insist on more for the moment.

"You can't be serious! Why?" Her words stumbled. "For one reason—my husband."

"Do you really love him? Answer honestly."

"I like him," she temporized.

"I can make you love me!"

"Perhaps," she wondered dreamily.

"Heart's June—and I mean every word of this—I love you more than any woman I have ever seen or known or heard of."

"Than your wife?"

"Than any woman!"

"But—your wife, John Meredith—dear."

His arm tightened at the endearing afterthought.

"I have— She wouldn't mind, I really believe."

Wide-eyed she faced him.

"Oh, yes, she would! She couldn't help herself!"

"And I shall help myself!" Exultation rang in his voice again. And help himself he did, several times. How could she protest, when her lips were so occupied?

"You ought to be ashamed, to kiss so—adorably, John Meredith," she cooed in confused confession.

"A judge, are you? You'll say 'yes,' beloved, won't you?"

"Yes?" in a puzzled tone.

"There! You've said it!"

"Yes—to what?"

"That we elope together—to-day!"

"You're joking!"

"Absolutely in earnest."

"But—"

"You've said 'yes!'"

"Silly! Stop— Why, it isn't done, John Meredith! We couldn't possibly! You know that—"

His face was businesslike.

"I have my car here. Your husband is at the inn?"

She shook her head slowly.

"All the better! I'll drop you there to change—get anything you must have. I'll give you ten minutes, and then—whiz! Anywhere you like, and I'm yours for life—or as long as you want me."

"Your wife? My husband?" They were almost gasps.

"These things are arranged, somehow. Perhaps they'll marry each other—good luck to 'em! 'June Meredith,'" he repeated the syllables gloatingly. "Almost 'Merry June.' Don't you like the name?"

"Oh, yes, it's lovely!" There was pain in her voice; she had only half heard him. "I simply can't to-day! I've made engagements—bridge to-night."

"A rubber—against our eternal happiness?"

"You call it that? I doubt if you've been married, after all."

"June, June—"

She played with his cheek for a moment.

"You're a dear boy, but quite ridiculous. I like you—yes. I don't mind lunching with you; but—eloping! They're entirely different."

"Amazing discovery!" he scowled.

"When you're through fussing, you can drop me by the inn." Her tones were cuttlingly sweet.

"Not until you promise you'll go with me." That creased brow, those arms folded like a very Napoleon, looked convincing.

"I won't promise you!" A smile came with the words, as she ducked her head and started for the car. "I won't promise you—that I won't!"

John Meredith whistled in delighted surprise, and packed down the path

after her. When a woman says "no," she means—no; that had been thought before, he reflected. He quickened his step to overtake her.

IV.

He slowed down the car after a while. His fingers sought hers.

"You're driving, John Meredith," she said. And again, "I wonder if you realize what you are asking me to do for you."

"I anticipate; we shall realize!"

"You may regret it."

"I will, promptly."

"Well! Disillusioned already!"

"We regret everything—at least once. Successes most of all. But, if I didn't insist upon your accepting, I'd regret it, unceasingly, all my life."

"I haven't accepted."

"You must!" A sincerer yearning crept into his tones.

"There's the inn," she pointed.

Promptly he stopped the car. They couldn't yet be seen from the porch of the mountain hostelry.

"Please," he begged.

Obstinately she shook her head.

"Take me on."

"You'll be ready in ten minutes?"

"I can't!"

"Not long enough?"

"It's time enough; but——"

He stopped the demur with the appropriate persuasion. "I'll be at the next corner for you, in ten minutes," he said.

She kissed him this time.

"Start the car."

He watched her slim, golden-bronze form run up the empty steps, across the deserted porch. Swinging into high, he raced to his own cottage, and flung on a sack suit. His suit case, luckily, was packed.

When he arrived at the corner, seven minutes had elapsed. In three minutes, then!

That is, if she'd come.

The second hand plodded along. Two and a half minutes—three-quarters—three minutes.

He looked up the street to the inn. No one in sight.

Trembling fingers shielded a lighted match at the tip of a cigarette, when five empty minutes had passed. When five more ached by, he scratched another match; the cigarette had gone out at once. Fifteen—twenty minutes.

Hmm! Ended—a summer day's idyl!

The engine began to throb. His body hunched itself forward on the seat. The wheels revolved gratingly upon the packed chert.

One final look—and just in time! Springing out of the car, he ran back to where she hurried down the road toward him, her cheeks on fire. Careless of place and time, he flung welcoming arms around her.

"Darling! June!"

"Careful, dearest!"

They were off together. She waved a contemptuous good-by to the inn, the unmet whist engagement, everything—everything!

V.

At length he restrained the first glad rush of the car, to take her in his arms. The joy in his eyes dazzled her.

"You amazing darling! It was great—wasn't it?"

"Silly, of course. Only, next year—the honeymoon, too."

"Six years of married life—and then to find love all over again!"

"With your own husband!"

"And my own wife!"

"The essence of romance, John Meredith! It really was—our meeting. I have enjoyed the husbandless two weeks; but to-day—the surprise. You make love rather well!"

"I improve with time, my dear. Next year! But we'll take a week off, now, anyhow, for that honeymoon!"



La Vie de Boheme

*In Greenwich Village and
Up to Date*

By Vennette Herron

Author of "The Joyous Dreamer,"
"The Long Love Trail," etc.

IT'S a delightful place—perfectly delightful!" Vera Westerley set down her glass, took up a cigarette, and, while leaning forward to make use of the light which her companion instantly struck and held ready for her, permitted her eyes to rove side-wise up and down the long length of the studio.

It was an enormous attic room at the top of an old building, lighted by two wide windows, looking on to the street, at one end, and by a big, square skylight in the roof, at the other. Directly in its center, a little flight of steps—dropped steeply between two walls, rimmed with a protecting wooden balustrade and provided with an iron handrail, like a ship's companionway—slanted down to a small door, which opened on to an upper corridor.

There were several quaint jogs in the contour of the chamber, and along one side, but set at various angles, were three doors which led into a workshop, a bath, and a kitchen. At the rear end, a doorway, hung with heavy, blue-green portières, gave entrance into a bedroom, the windows of which looked out upon a large court, the core of a city block. There was an immense amount of space in the whole suite and a windswept freshness, in spite of its low ceilings.

On the floor below it were several

smaller studios and, below these in turn, two or three stories of shops. Ascension to this eyrie could be made only by climbing a series of seemingly endless stairs, rising between fireproofed walls of green-painted tin, piled one above the other and connected by dim and narrow hallways which led from the top of one flight to the foot of the next. Hidden by its inaccessibility, isolated and unexpected, the topmost apartment hung above the dust and noise of a cheaply trafficking street—a perfect trysting place.

The walls of the main room were lined with low, gray shelves, filled with books and antique china, and interspersed, here and there, with mirrors and ultramodern paintings. There were blue hangings at the windows and a few good Chinese rugs in blue and buff upon the painted floor. The furniture consisted of several pieces of fine old walnut and mahogany, supplemented by comfortable rattan tables and chairs. Built around a corner, so as to include one of the front windows, was a large, triangular seat, covered with blue-slipped mattresses and heaped with pillows of divers shades.

Upon this ample divan, at the present moment, lounged a boy of twenty-two or thereabout, with very beautiful white teeth, chestnut hair, and the most im-

gent-looking, dark-lashed, blue eyes in the world. He was clad in white pajamas, and a guitar, upon which he strummed intermittently, lay across his knees.

Opposite the boy sat a woman with reddish hair and dark eyes, wearing a peach-colored *robe intime*, trimmed with blue ribbons, and holding a small yellow dog in her lap.

Between them stood a taboret, bearing sandwiches, cakes, and a bottle of wine—for this was a short time before the temporary triumph of Puritanism. A tiny clock, upon a highboy hard by, would have indicated, had they taken the trouble to look, that the hour was half after two. A cool night breeze, breathing a hint of the summer dawn, following close on its heels, fanned the cheeks of the two.

"How did you ever happen to find it, child?" questioned Vera, retrieving her eyes from their tour of inspection and sinking back among her cushions, the better to enjoy her cigarette.

"Didn't I tell you? Hélène found it—or rather, some friends of hers told her about it and she sent me to look it up."

"You mean your stepmother?"

"Surely. You've seen her—and I couldn't call her mother—now, could I?" Ted Mathers laid aside his guitar and took up a little flute from the bench beside him. "She's a perfect peach, and if dad hadn't married her, I might have fallen in love with her myself. I hope to Heaven she'll teach the governor a few things, anyway!" With which devout prayer, Ted began to blow a vagrant, faunlike tune upon his pipe.

"You shouldn't do that at this hour, child. How long since your father married her?"

"Why? It doesn't matter what one does here, and I want to wake up Otto. I think he's staying with Mrs. Townsend, but I want to make certain—and I can, if I get him mad enough."

"Silly infant! What difference does it make? How long since they were married, did you say?"

"Who—oh, dad and Hélène? About two years. She's a French-Canadian, you know. Her father was a superintendent in the governor's mill, out in Mayfield. Thank Heaven—and Hélène—I don't have to go into that now! I guess it was she who changed the old man's mind; she has more influence over him than any one else ever had."

"Is he really such a dragon—your father? I can't imagine it!"

"Honestly, you ought to see him! He thinks it's wicked to drink—and that I ought to be in bed at eleven o'clock—and, as for girls—gosh! He's never done a thing in his life, except run his old mill and come to town now and again to see how his only son is behaving. Thank goodness, he rarely finds out! How he ever had spunk enough to get Hélène, I don't know. I wish she'd come to see me sometimes; but she never does—she leaves that to the old man. I should think she'd die spending all her time being nice to him!"

"She's so pretty, too—and so young! She doesn't look any older than I do."

"Oh, I wouldn't say that, princess; but she's all right! Gee, I'm so crazy about this place, I wish I could keep it indefinitely! Come over here, poodle, and talk to me a while!" Ted reached out and dragged the limp and contented dog from its mistress' lap. "Sit up, if you want some food!"

"How long can you have it, dear?" The woman smiled affectionately at the pretty boy and the tiny dog, who now sat obediently ramrod straight, after the manner of professional canine beggars, with its shining, topaz eyes fixed greedily upon the bit of cake in Ted's hand.

"Only till the first of October. I'd love to stay here all winter—especially as you like it and it's such a handy place for you to come."

"But, then, you're going to open your long-talked-of art shop in the Village, aren't you? That knowledge ought to compensate you somewhat."

"Yes, and it's going to be a success, too! I've millions of bushels of new ideas. You know, princess, that I never could have worked in a mill—even if it should belong to me some time! Well, anyway, the governor's come round, at last. He's running in on Tuesday, to settle the final arrangements."

"Then I'd better keep away to-morrow, hadn't I? I take it, he might not approve of my visits to you."

"The governor? Good heavens, no! He'd throw a fit, if he ever found you here! I'd never get my art shop then, and it would mean back to the country for me—or starve. He's stopped my allowance already. However, it's worth taking a chance on, sweetheart. To-morrow, I'm not going up to that damned old office; I'm going to sleep until twenty-one o'clock, and spend the rest of the day playing with you and the poodle."

"Then I'll go to my studio to-morrow night, after dinner."

"I suppose so—but I hate to have you. Three days go by so quickly, don't they?"

"Cheer up, honey child; next week-end isn't so far away!"

"Yes, and you've got to come back then or I'll cry—big, sawdust tears."

"Baby, how can you be so absurd, when you spent the whole first part of this very evening playing in a cabaret and flirting with dozens of little girls? I don't doubt but that any one of them could keep back the tears as well as I."

"Humph! You haven't seen them, princess! They're funny little things—all dressed in spots."

"In spots?"

"Yes; they wear whatever they can work anybody to give 'em. Some of them come out in hundred-dollar dresses with holes in their gloves, and

others appear in thirty-five dollar ~~hats~~ with split-out slippers—but you never find one of them dressed right, clear through!"

"You ridiculous infant!" trilled Vera, between chuckles. "Tell me, how can a little sawdust doll, with thirty-nine notches in his belt—or is it forty-three?—always distinguish which of us it is who makes him happiest? Are you always even certain whom you're talking to?"

"Princess!" Ted looked as reproachful as a baby deprived of its rattle. "The sky's full of lights, but you can always pick out the moon from the stars, can't you? I'm particularly happy to have you here, and I know that you're Vera—so there!" And, seizing her hand, he covered it with kisses.

Then, suddenly, without warning, and with a complete reversion to the prankish, he sprang up, raced the length of the studio, dashed through the curtains which shut off the bedroom, and, leaning far out of a window into the court, called loudly:

"Otto—Otto!"

Barking shrilly, the little dog scampered merrily after the boy.

"What in the world are you doing? Are you crazy, child?" protested Vera, trailing more leisurely after the pair.

"I want to find out if he's there; it would be great to have something on old Otto! Oh, by the way, if you want to telephone or anything, run in to Mrs. Townsend; she's an awfully good sport!"

"I know—I was talking to her yesterday; we've struck up quite a friendship already."

"I think I'm sleepy, princess."

"Very well, child, you shall sleep as soon as you like."

It was noon and the sun was shining brightly, flooding the room with a joyous, golden glitter, when Vera awoke. Ted still slept, looking like a virtuous

cherub, with his long, dark lashes resting against his flushed cheeks, and the little yellow dog curled in the crook of one arm.

For a time, Vera lay comfortably, stretching, reflecting, gradually regaining the ego, which had strayed afar in her dreams. One by one, the scattered bits of herself came trailing home, until consciousness was complete, and there clicked into its proper place in her brain the remembrance of an important engagement, made some time previously, for that morning—and one which it was now too late to keep. Courtesy demanded that she send an excuse as quickly as possible. But how, since the apartment which Ted had sublet had no telephone? Mrs. Townsend. Of course!

Very quietly, Vera slipped the peach-colored negligee over her cream-silk nightgown, thrust her feet into blue-satin mules, ran a comb through her curled hair and caught it, with a single negligent pin, to the crown of her head, and then tiptoed down the stairs.

She discovered the door at the bottom to be secured with one of those combination locks which can be opened by the turning of knobs from the inside, but only by the insertion of a latchkey from without. Not holding such a key, and not wishing to waken the boy in order to get in again, Vera twisted the little handle and pressed down the catch, which prevented the door from locking after her.

This done, and with the intention of returning as soon as she had accomplished her errand, she stepped blithely down the corridor. From one of the front studios came the sounds of laughter, masculine and feminine combined, and Vera smiled reminiscently.

Mrs. Townsend, wearing a gorgeously figured Batik robe, admitted her cordially.

"Come in, my dear!" she exclaimed. "I'm just having breakfast, and there's

plenty of everything. Do sit down and share."

"We're going to have some upstairs, later," demurred Vera. "I just wanted to ask if I might use your telephone? Ted's asleep, and I left the door unlocked."

"Oh, that's all right—nobody ever snoops here! Call up, by all means; but then, *do* stay! One can always eat two breakfasts. Sit down, like a good girl, and I'll make some hot toast."

Briskly, and with irresistible good-fellowship, Mrs. Townsend filled a cup with steaming coffee, which she set before her guest. Then she fell to slicing bread.

"It's the fun of living in these old places!" she went on. "We all do as we please, and none of us can criticize the others, because we're all so much alike—except, of course, me and thee. If the world at large only knew how easy and jolly it is, all people would live as we do, wouldn't they? Do have some jam! How's the picture coming on, Miss Westerley? Are you working now?"

"Yes, I'm going home to-night—Ted's expecting his father in the morning—and do nothing but paint, the rest of the week. What was that?"

Probably Ted jumping out of bed—he always shakes the house. Run up and tell him to join us; there's no use of your bothering now, when I have so much of everything made. Do!"

"All right! Thanks, heaps! I'll be back in a moment."

Vera rose, gathered her draperies about her, and ran, as fast as her clicking, high-heeled mules would permit, down the hall, through the door, which now stood ajar, and up the stairs.

With a sweeping glance, Vera saw that the studio was empty.

"Oh, Ted!" she hailed lightly; and then, without pausing for a reply, crossed to the portières, from behind

which issued the sharp, frantic barks, with which the little dog always welcomed either a newcomer or an invitation to frolic. Judging the animal's excitement to proceed from the latter cause, she pulled aside the curtains and stood poised on the threshold, gazing into the bedroom.

In the middle of the big, mahogany four-poster, sat Ted, bolt upright, and with a supremely dazed expression upon his sleepy, boyish face. At the foot of the bed stood a tall, thin, slightly stooped, old man, with iron-gray hair, angrily beetling brows, and with his hand upraised in a threatening gesture of righteous indignation. All about the room were strewn pieces of apparel—a pair of brocaded corsets, a buckled slipper, a frock, and, upon the dressing table, beside a silver-backed brush and a powder box, a long, faun-colored, silk stocking.

For one petrified instant, Vera remained where she was. The solution of pretending to be a casual visitor from downstairs presented itself, but was dismissed, after a second survey of the room, as impracticable. Obviously, there was nothing to say, and, recognizing this, with a little gasp, she turned and ignominiously fled.

Halfway downstairs, she heard an outraged male voice saying:

"I'm going—I'm going—and you needn't expect me to come here again!" After this, her retreat developed into a panic. Feeling the eyes of the old man upon her, and impeded by her dragging, clattering mules, she stumbled down the final steps and burst madly into Mrs. Townsend's dining room. The little dog followed her, its hair bristled upright, but scarcely more so than her own.

"Oh!" squeaked Vera, panting for breath. "There's a man up there, and I know it's Ted's father!" She sank into a chair, while her hostess' laughter rang out.

"How screamingly funny!" cried Mrs. Townsend. "How perfectly delicious!" Vera, too, began to giggle, but dubiously.

"Fancy his being angry!" she said. "If my dad ever happened upon anything like that, he'd apologize for his awkwardness, depart at once, and send in a peace offering—wine or something. But this old man looked furious! Isn't it naïve? Ted told me he was like that, but I couldn't believe it. Oh, dear!"

"What is it, honey?" Mrs. Townsend made a brave attempt to strangle her amusement long enough to appear sympathetic.

"What if he should refuse to give Ted the money for his shop, and force him to go back to the mill, instead? He's set his heart on doing something like that in the Village and I'd never forgive myself! What shall I do?" Tragically, she took a gulp of coffee, then set down her cup.

Came, just then, the sounds of snorting and muttering in the hall, accompanied by a stamping tread. Would the interloper invade their premises and force his wrath upon their heads? The two women held their breaths. But the steps passed on, growing fainter and fainter, like the noise of a pebble falling down hill, as they descended from flight to flight.

A moment later, after a quick, preliminary rap, Ted entered, wrapped in a yellow dressing gown and a woebegone expression.

"Damn it all!" he greeted them fiercely. "Regularly, every spring, the governor catches me in something! I'm going to move out of town for May and June, after this!"

Both of the women, by now, were in gales.

"It's not funny," the boy went on, attacking them belligerently. "The old idiot refuses to come across on account

of it at all, and now I can't have my shop. Why the dickens did he have to show up a day earlier than he said he would?"

"Oh, Ted!" cried both, between giggles. "It's a shame! Do tell us what he said?"

"Said I was going straight to perdition—that I was entertaining improper people—that that's what I wanted money for—and that he saw a woman running through the studio; the old boy's as nearsighted as a bat."

"Oh, child, I'm so sorry—but you would ask me to visit you!" Vera spoke ruefully.

"Of course, princess!" The boy rose gallantly to the occasion. "And I'll ask you again! He swore he'd never come back, and I hope he remembers it! But what the devil am I to do now? If I could only get something on him! Why did you ever leave the door open, Vera, so that he could walk right in?"

"I meant to come back, child, immediately after telephoning; but Mrs. Townsend asked me to breakfast, and it never occurred to me——"

"Well, I only wish she'd invited your clothes, too! We'll have to make up some story! It's impossible ever to get anything on the governor. What can I say? Oh, but what's the use—he'll never fork over now!" Ted groaned.

"Cheer up, boy!" encouraged Mrs. Townsend. "Drink your coffee and we'll think of something."

For an hour they sat with their heads together, engaged in the oral composition of a letter, nicely calculated to lull the suspicion and rearouse the benevolent intentions of an irate parent.

"If he only had a sense of humor!" moaned Vera. "But evidently he hasn't. Well, it's nearly two o'clock, and we'd better go up and dress, anyway. Come in, child; don't grieve. We'll find some way to win him back—and it *was* funny!"

Trooping merrily, they all went
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down the corridor as far as Ted's door, and stood there chatting, while he put his hand on the knob. It turned, but the door remained fast. Either he or his father, passing excitedly out, had sprung the catch and so clamped the lock.

"And my keys are upstairs!" said Ted. "And we're down here, without any clothes! If this isn't a climax—great hat!"

Looking wildly at each other, mirth claimed them all. This final episode was too much! Clinging helplessly to the banisters behind them, they rocked with laughter, until the tears streamed from their eyes.

"But what are we going to do?" queried Ted, when he, at last, could speak.

"I know," proposed Mrs. Townsend resourcefully. "There's a fire escape from D'Orcy's window up to yours. I'll dress, get him to let me through his window, and then climb up the ladder and come down and let you in. How's that?"

"Fine! But it's an awful bother for you," responded Vera. "And every one can see you from the street."

"What do I care?" answered Mrs. Townsend, snapping her fingers. "There's no other way—and it'll be a great lark!"

Hastily she retired to her bedroom and blossomed forth, in an incredibly brief space of time, in a plain skirt, sandals, and a smock.

"Now for the raid!" she declared gayly.

Shrinking back out of sight, Ted and Vera watched and waited, while their indomitable hostess advanced and pounded vigorously upon one of the doors at the front of the building.

"I'm sure that I heard some one there, when I came down," insisted Vera.

"Well, they don't answer now. They must have gone out," responded Mrs. Townsend. "I'll tell you, though, I think one of my keys would open this."

She darted back into her own apartment and returned triumphantly, with a big key in her hand. "I know it will," she continued, "for I used it to admit the paper hangers once, before D'Orcy moved in."

"Better knock again," cautioned Ted.

Firmly, Mrs. Townsend did so; and then, still receiving no response, inserted the key in the lock, a little stealthily, as one instinctively does, upon furtive occasions, even when one's conscience is entirely clear.

Convinced that they were alone upon the floor, Ted and Vera ventured to approach. They knew that the studio, which was about to be broken into on their behalf, belonged to a French artist, gossip about whom had more than once reached their ears, and their piqued curiosity drew them on, unconsciously, to a point from which the interior of his sanctum would be visible, once it were violated.

Very softly, Mrs. Townsend turned the key and then, with a dramatic flourish, threw wide the door. She remained rooted to the spot, gibbering faintly. It was impossible to say who was the more astonished—the three culprits in the hall or the two disclosed within the room.

For, in the center of the chamber, thus rudely made public, stood a young woman with her head completely enveloped in the skirt of a frock which she was trying to put on and the hooks of which had caught in her hair; while, beside her, stood a black-eyed man, who had obviously been attempting to assist in the necessitated disentanglement, with fingers made clumsy and ineffectual by nervous haste. As the door flew open, the Frenchman sprang backward and then leaned toward the intruders.

"What in blazes does this mean?" he demanded with a slight accent, but in perfectly intelligible English.

"I—we—" stammered Mrs. Townsend.

The veiled woman gave a desperate

and exasperated jerk to her moored garment, which tore it loose from her disheveled tress and brought it down to cover her shapely, silk-stockinged legs. Then she cast one savage glance at her observers, and uttered a piercing shriek, which was echoed by a shout from Ted.

"Hélène—of all things! Well, if this isn't a family party! Hurray! What's the use of worrying?" And his bewildered expression changed to one of derisive delight.

"*Mon Dieu!* Come and shut the door!" begged the second Mrs. Mathers. "Your father may be along at any minute!"

"He's been!" announced her stepson grimly. "So this is why you planted me up here? Clever stuff! But since you were using me, you might, at least, have seen to it that the governor didn't take me by surprise."

"I couldn't help it," answered Mrs. Mathers. "He had to come to-day on business. What would you? I could not perish with ennui—at my age. What do you intend to do about it?"

"That remains to be seen," replied Ted with a judicial air.

Monsieur d'Orcy, puzzled, but obedient to an imperative gesture from Mrs. Mathers, stepped forward and closed the door, shutting them all inside.

Vera plucked at Ted's sleeve.

"Tell her," she commanded, "and make her square you with papa!"

"I've already thought of that." And, seating himself, Ted proceeded to give them a highly artistic account of the occurrences of the morning.

Long before he had finished, Mrs. Mathers was laughing.

"Oh, la, la!" she exclaimed. "How it is *drôle!* You can't blame me, can you, for running away occasionally to play with my old friend—when I have to live with ideas like that?"

"I can't blame you for anything, Hélène, if you can fix the old man!" replied Ted, accenting the "if."

"Leave that to me!" promised his stepmother with a sage shake of her pretty head. "Ah, ah!" And she broke into a fresh peal of laughter.

"So this is Ted? I hope that you like the atelier which I discovered for you, *mon ami*?" And, grinning, the Frenchman held out his hand.

"I like it a lot," replied the boy, accepting the proffer of friendship, "only you should have let me in on the scheme; but, if you'll only climb up the fire-escape and let me into it again, I'll be eternally grateful."

"With the greatest pleasure, *mon-sieur*!" And, while they all looked on, he performed the required feat.

A moment later, the fatal door swung wide.

"Enter, *mes enfants*," invited Monsieur d'Orsy, from the stairs.

"Come up and have a drink, all of you," suggested Ted.

"No, *mon fils*; your father may return, and we'd better be away," replied Hélène.

"But what will you tell him?" her stepson teased. "And don't forget that, if you fail to settle him——"

"Don't you dare to threaten me, you bad boy! I shall tell him that it was I—who had been shopping and was trying on costumes in your dressing room. It would never occur to his New England mind that I might have a flirtation with you, *mon fils*." She paused, for a coquettish instant, to observe Ted's reaction to her suggestion, and then went on, "And I shall say that I ran because I had on a gown with which I wished later to surprise him and that he owes you an apology for his base suspicions and insults—and that he should never trust to his poor sight again. He'll believe it—you'll see!"

That evening, while Ted and Vera lingered over their dinner, there arrived a messenger, bearing, not exactly an apology, but, what was infinitely more satisfactory to the boy, a substantial check, signed: "William Mather."

"It needs but one thing to round out a perfect day," sighed Ted. "We didn't find out about Otto."

"Well, if it will add anything to your comfort," retorted Vera, "I saw a pair of blue pajamas lying across Mrs. Townsend's bed."



VALEDICTION

YES, it were foolishness to bid you hear
That which the silent night alone must know—
I would not with wild words distress your ear
Or give you pain. Far better I should go.

But in the darkness when the stars are high,
And hot winds drift across the sandy plain—
Fierce is the fight, hard won the victory,
That leaves me beaten to the dawn's disdain.

Yet still the secret is my own to keep,
And I shall keep it till the day I die.
Perchance my spirit then may break its sleep
To tell you that I loved you—even I.

MAUD A. BLACK.



Two From the Dark

By Louise Bryant

Author of "If Ever You Come to Die," etc.

THE year was dying slowly. It was almost November, and the trees were not yet bare. From my windows I looked out on flaming sumac, on yellow maples, lavender and purple asters, gold and scarlet zinnias. I remember it all so distinctly because it was my first year on the "farm," as we jokingly called my five acres near Tarrytown. I remember it because it was a blessed contrast to the bleakness of the city and the drabness of a hospital cot. I had struggled through a severe attack of typhoid, and as soon as I was strong enough, I had gone to the country with Esmeralda.

Esmeralda is a distinct product of the fast-vanishing Far West, and she has been a mother and a nurse and a great-hearted friend to me ever since I can remember. Our meeting was unusual. I will recount it, in order to give you some idea of the character of Esmeralda. It was a severe case of measles that brought us together. That and a rather early manifestation of feminism on my part—a desire for a world not composed and ruled entirely by men.

When father rushed off to the gold fields of Tonopah in the days of the big boom, I was four years old. He took me along because he did not know where on earth to leave me. I was motherless and father was a poor man. Tonopah in those days consisted of a post office, two grocery stores, seven saloons, with furnished rooms on the second floors, a Catholic church, a restricted district, and a few thousand tents.

Father "struck it rich" almost immediately, so we lived in affluence over

one of the saloons. We had for a cook and general servant Yee Gee, a kindly old Chinaman. I was the only child in the town and the only women were in the restricted district.

No one was ever able to tell how I contracted measles and no one seemed able to cure me once I had them, since the town did not yet boast a physician. I was very much spoiled by the attentions of the whole camp, and father never opposed me in anything. I think back now, with a tightening of the heart, of the time, a few years later, when he tried to bribe the proprietor of a fashionable southern California hotel into permitting me to keep a pet lamb in my bedroom. Father was always like that. So it was, that when I discovered all the irritating red spots on my face and hands, father got down on his knees beside the bed and asked me what I wanted. Was it a pony, candy, toys? I burst into a wild wail.

"I want a mother!"

Without a word, father put on his hat and walked to the other end of town. He returned with Esmeralda. The authorities were a little shocked that he should violate precedent by bringing Esmeralda over the sacred line, but they made an exception on account of my illness—and a generous contribution.

Not long afterward, father sold out and went South. Of course, we took Esmeralda.

When father died, he left Esmeralda a comfortable fortune, but we continued in the same relation as before. She had never been a servant to me; she had been always a much needed foster mother. And Esmeralda was not one to "put on airs." It is almost unne-

cessary to say that she had never shown the slightest inclination of returning to her old life. She seemed to have no further interest in men whatever. I think I can safely state, although I am certainly no authority on mothers, that she guided me a bit more wisely for her bitter experience. I was inclined to be wild, I hated college, and yet, she somehow cajoled me into staying until I had my A. B.

It was just after graduation that I was laid low with my second illness. And this takes us back to Tarrytown and all that happened there.

My house was of Dutch architecture, low and rambling and comfortable. It was built by the pioneer, Van Wyck, who once owned a thousand acres around it. It was set back on a side road several miles from the village. I had a glimpse of the shimmering Hudson and a full, glorious view of the sunset. All this from the front. And from the back, just over the crest of the hill, exposed to every wind that blew, was Ben's house. Ben was the black sheep of the village, and we were his only neighbors.

Ben's house was a sad contrast to my neat, white-walled, green-shuttered one. It was a two-story affair, unpainted and the garden gone wild. The upper story was empty and the shutters were locked. The picket fence was broken here and there and the gate hung on one hinge.

Ben had lived there for forty-five horrible years and his mother had lived with him. Whenever I passed, I saw her scared, white face peering through a lower window. Once, I hesitated. I wanted to go in, but I caught the anxious look she threw me and hurried on. It was too late. Yes, it was years too late. I would only frighten her.

Every one knew the story of Ben. The grocer told it to Esmeralda, and the woman who helped with the cleaning told it to me. She rattled it off

without the slightest trace of sympathy. "Children must suffer for the sins of the fathers," she said, as if that in any way justified the blind cruelty of the community.

Ben's mother was the daughter of a Puritanical New England judge. When she was seventeen she had fallen in love with a poor boy of the town and her father had promptly forbidden the marriage. For three years they waited, meeting secretly, planning and hoping. But it was too hard a test for adolescence.

She was a timid soul, soft and yielding. Only once did she show strength. That was on the day they brought her news that her sweetheart had been accidentally killed while hunting. Then she went straight to her father and made a full confession. She denounced him with all the passion of grief-stricken youth. "We were married before God!" she said, and in that brief moment she even had the courage to tell him she would soon become a mother.

Her father was a hard man. He heard her through to the end, and he would have killed her if he had dared. He did not dare, but he planned a punishment more cruel than death. He banished her to that out-of-the-way, run-down estate where we found her nearly half a century later. He gave her an income of just enough to eke out the most miserable existence. There, all alone, in that ghostly old house, the baby was born. And fear made her commit the second sin—made her pretend that the child was not hers. She taught Ben to call her "sister."

I have always believed that she might have been forgiven in her new surroundings, she was so pretty and so blond and so young—except for the second sin. We all despise hypocrisy, and her story had followed her almost as fast as her baggage. She was as isolated as a leper. No friendly farmer's

wife ever crossed that unhappy threshold.

Life proved too strong for her frail hands. In a few years she broke down completely, and spent her whole time in bed, except on those rare occasions when she looked out the window, wistfully, at some passing stranger.

With her father's death, all avenues to outside life were closed to her. He left her the house, but no money. The remainder of his fortune went into the building of a new church in order to secure his safe conduct into heaven. She probably had no idea that she could contest the will, or else she was too shy—if, indeed, she had retained her reason. Ben managed, by doing odd jobs, to keep life in their bodies. He was almost as timid and as isolated as his mother. They were in constant terror of losing the roof over their heads until we came.

Ben grew to manhood in the only way he knew how. He fought unseen and intangible enemies. He fought prejudice and tradition and ignorance. His mother taught him how to read. He never attended public school and he was shunned by the village children. All his life he had the habit of sitting for hours every evening on the high hill behind his house, looking into the distance which he had never penetrated, and dreaming. When life had beaten him, he began to drink.

On those occasions, when he sought oblivion, we used to see him struggling homeward up the hill. Esmeralda would shake her head and I knew that she was deeply touched. One evening a farmer passed and, stopping to chat with Esmeralda, told her, laughingly, that Ben was lying in a stupor on the side of the road. Her eyes blazed, but she said nothing. She went indoors and put a shawl over her head. In a little while, I saw two figures emerge slowly and painfully out of the twilight. One was Esmeralda.

It was not easy to reach Ben. He was like a wild creature. At the first unfamiliar object or sound, he took flight. Men were his natural enemies. He knew and loved the friendly woods. We discovered that he knew all about trees and birds. He had a fine ear for music and could imitate any birdcall. There was something almost uncanny in the way plants responded to his care. Neither Esmeralda nor I knew much about gardens, so we gave ours entirely over to Ben. He took no small pride in it; perhaps the first pride he had taken in anything.

This slow progress, on our part, toward the rejuvenation of Ben, might have taken years. He always maintained a peculiar reserve, a cautious distance. But this was all changed by the sudden death of his mother.

It happened in the night. Ben thought he heard her call and went to her. He found her cold. In terror, he ran down the black road and rapped at my door. I was still awake and I made him come in and warm himself. Esmeralda bustled about and brought him hot coffee. He gulped it as if his throat were paralyzed, and for a long time he did not speak. Then he burst out suddenly:

"She's all I've got! Oh, mother! Mother!"

He had never called her mother while she lived. Unconsciously, now he cast aside that foolish and all-too-apparent deception. Esmeralda realized she had him off guard. She began abruptly:

"Look here, Ben, you have *me*! You're not *all* alone! I'm your neighbor—and I'm your friend."

The last word caught him.

"Friend?" he repeated stupidly. "Friend? Why, I've never had a *friend* in my whole life!"

He began to sob; tears trickled through his fingers.

I knew he had suffered deeply, but I never realized just how thoroughly he

had been crucified until he made that amazing confession. He sat before us now, his pale blue eyes blind with tears, held by the old agony, but clutching at the new hope that he would not be utterly abandoned.

Esmeralda, with her easy practicality, took charge of the funeral arrangements; and, somehow, without any unnecessary preliminaries—just as she had once taken charge of me—she now took charge of Ben.

I pondered over this new relationship through several sleepless nights. I owed Esmeralda everything. If I got out now and went to Italy or some other sun-kissed land, I could get strong just as well—and might not these two lonely souls, if left alone, find greater courage in each other's company?

I made my plans and bought my tickets before I told Esmeralda. All this consumed a month, during which I had time to observe a marvelous change in Ben.

One spring morning, when apple blossoms filled the air, I strolled along the road until I came to Ben's demoralized

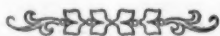
picket fence. Esmeralda sat on the stoop and Ben was busy painting his astonished house. The shutters had all been unlocked, and a soft breeze lifted the curtains. Mr. Higgins, the grocer, was passing. He drew up before the gate with the evident intention of taking a cruel thrust at Ben.

"Well," he drawled, "seems to me you are making great preparations. I wonder—what your—ah—sister would have thought."

For a full minute, Ben painted in silence. When he turned around, his face wore an almost childlike smile.

"Shucks," he remarked good-naturedly, "she wasn't my sister, she was my mother! And a right good mother she was, too!"

Mr. Higgins didn't stop to hear any more. He whipped up his horse and passed me without a nod, as I turned homeward, reflecting on the miracle of Ben's recovery. I was glad that I was to sail the next day. It was high time for me to go. Esmeralda had once told me that she would never marry unless she found a man who needed her more than I did.



IF

COULD I but break the round year into dust;
 Loose jonquils from their old ports everywhere,
 Mists from fence corners; each thing with the thrust
 And prick of spring; into white meal could tear
 Midsummer clouds and strew them east and west;
 Choke in the gust along the autumn sun
 The trouble of the rose, the scattered nest—
 I would forget him, and my griefs be done!
 But what of yesterdays? Their ghosts remain.
 Some exquisite double holds them fast in mind.
 His wraith would fleet across the hard new mold,
 Each footstep start its like, and so be twain;
 And if I plucked a flower in that new wind,
 Twain would I pluck and of the selfsame gold!

LIZETTE WOODWORTH REESE.

TO PAN

(In Answer to the "Villanelle of the Living Pan.")

By Olga Petrova

ARMED with your song, I sought the living Pan,
Although, methought, he lay too still for sleep;
I cried upon his name and, crying, ran
Among purple grapes and where quaint palm trees fan
The Ægean shore, where strange, sleek night beasts creep:
Armed with your song, I sought the living Pan.
Through fields of asphodel, star-drenched and wan,
Where court the dryads once were wont to keep,
I cried upon his name and, crying, ran.
Only the screech owls in their coats of tan
Answered my cry and cursed me loud and deep.
Armed with your song, I sought the living Pan.

*"Great Pan is dead, and deader yet than Pan,"
They hooted, "is his memory to man."
I cried upon his name and, crying, ran.*

Bloodshod, I fell upon the sward a span,
And for his passing let my poor heart weep.
Armed with your song, I sought the living Pan
Till sleep's white fingers subtly began
My grief in black imaginings to steep;
I cried upon his name and, crying, ran.
I dreamed of throngs whose every passing man
Spat in my face and laughed to see me weep.
Armed with your song, I sought the living Pan.
I cried: "Singer of songs, no longer can
I sing, 'The Goat God lives.'" Though, deep in sleep,
I cried upon his name and, crying, ran.
And then I cursed the swinish, monstrous ban
That hides the soul from beauty stark and steep.
Armed with your song, I sought the living Pan.

*Then on my ears strange strains of music ran,
Soft-fluted notes, most passionately sweet;
Then, through the haze, I glimpsed the singer fleet,
Pan-bearded and Pan-lipped; his cloven feet
I could not see, nor yet his flute: his hands
Held but a pencil! But through many lands
His songs reëchoed, strong to break the bands of time and space.
I cried upon his name, nor crying ran.
Armed with your song, I found the living Pan!*

Ainslee's Books of the Month

POOR RELATIONS, by Compton Mackenzie;
Harper & Brothers, New York.

THE tragedy of having relations can, Compton Mackenzie seems to think, be turned into burlesque when those relations happen to be the poor and elegantly acquisitive kind. With such, one may scale the heights of tyrannical benevolence, and sound the depths of the pocketbook.

In Compton Mackenzie's novel, the hero is a fatuous ass—a successful playwright, the author of "romantic" plays. Although he is not the eldest son, he is the only rich one, and pays for his success by supporting his sisters and their husbands and their children, and his brothers. The pleasure he derives from the process more than compensates, of course, for the absence of any gratitude given him, and for years the fellow allows the family females to dominate him and his home.

Returning to London from America, where he has attended the New York presentation of his play, and enjoyed a respite from active benevolence, John Touchwood overhears a girl, who seems to him very attractive, say that she has too much pride ever to become a poor relation. During the trip, he becomes more or less friendly with her, learns that she wants to be a secretary, and conceives the idea of some day employing her. Her rather distant manner prevents him from broaching the subject on shipboard, but he takes her address and plans to call on her in England.

Back at his country home, presided over by his sister, a widow with a young devil for a son, and visited frequently by another sister, married to an unc-

tuious clergyman whom he detests, John finds his life becoming unbearable, and leaves to be alone in his rooms in London. When he is forced to get his brother Hugh out of a forgery scrape, he can suffer alone no longer, and, persuading himself that his work—he is writing a play about Joan of Arc—requires it, seeks out the secretary and makes her his confidant. It is only when the secretary is subjected to all sorts of annoyance by his alarmed family that John finally summons the courage to rid himself of all his encumbrances, and take one not related to him.

In "Poor Relations," Mr. Mackenzie has succeeded in writing a book which is pure comedy. The thing is fun from start to finish. Nevertheless, the characterization is at all times keen and true, and developed with a satire that is too subtle to be either bitter or mild. The most striking feature of the man's work is its appearance of having been ruthlessly cut. Mr. Mackenzie has not allowed to creep into his novel a single sentence that is dull. One feels that he read and reread his manuscript to find a phrase that might be found boring, and then, fond of it or not, dispatched it.

While reading anything of Compton Mackenzie's, one dares not skip a sentence or glide over a page. One may miss something like Hugh's justification for having forged the name of his architect employer, Stephen Crutchley, to a check. So drunk that his eyes are glazing over, he says: "Don't try to take any literary advantage of me, Johnnie. You can dig out the longest word in the dictionary, but I've got a longer. Metempsychosis! Hear that? I'm will-

ing to admit that I don't like having to say it, but you find me another man who can say it all after George's port. Metempsychosis! And it's not a disease. No, no, no, no! Don't you run away with the idea that it's a disease. Not at all. It's a religion. And for three years I've been wasting valuable knowledge like that on an architect's office. Do you think Stevie wants to hear about metempsychosis—that's the third time I've cleared it. Of course he doesn't!"

Or, again: "You're beginning to dramatize yourself, John. I suppose it's inevitable, but I wish you wouldn't. It gives me the same kind of embarrassed feeling that I get when a woman starts reciting. You're not subjective. That's the curse of all romantic writers. You want to get an objective viewpoint. You're not the only person on in this scene. I'm on. Aubrey's on. Mrs. Fenton and Stevie are waiting in the wings, as it were. And, for all I know, the police may be waiting there, too, by this time. Get an objective viewpoint, Johnnie. Subjectivity went out with Rousseau." And this to the accompaniment of a request for money to keep him from prison. Worse even than a relative that resembles you, it appears, is one who sees through you.

L. V. B.

BEDOUINS, by James Huneker; Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

IN a land where criticism cannot be said to flourish, we are fortunate in having at least one of the most distinguished of contemporary critics: James Huneker. His books constitute a portrait gallery of the writers, painters, musicians—the artists generally—which one should know, or confess himself an ignoramus. Huneker has a flair for the exotic. He makes discoveries, while other critics are still burning incense before the idols of yesterday. His is the only comment in English on the work of more than one foreign genius. One

may be reasonably certain that he has not overlooked a single noteworthy European of the past fifty years. "Bedouins" carries forward his admirable tradition. For the first fifty pages he praises Mary Garden. He has new things to say about Anatole France and Chopin, who are known to every one, and about Octave Mirbeau, who is not so well known to Americans, but deserves to be. For good measure, he concludes with seven short stories from his own earlier work, which I do not recommend to any reader who prefers a desert of marshmallows to one of *baba au rhum*.

THE YANKEE IN THE BRITISH ZONE, by Ewen Cameron MacVeagh and Lee D. Brown; G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York.

AMERICAN participation in the war will inevitably be the theme, some day, of sound literature. It is a commonplace to point out that at present we lack the proper perspective, and that the current crop of soldier reminiscences cannot hope to be more than human documents on which the classics of the future will be built. But there is a wide difference between good war books and bad. The latter have been in an overwhelming majority. Among the former, "The Yankee in the British Zone" occupies an honorable place. Here is a realistic account, written in straightforward fashion and rich in anecdotes both humorous and tragic. The phase which it covers has had few chroniclers, because of the two million American soldiers in France only about twenty-five thousand served throughout as part of the British organization. Ewen Cameron MacVeagh and Lee D. Brown were officers of the small contingent, and they have made the best possible use of the material which fortune threw their way. Lee D. Brown is at present editor of the *People's Magazine*.

W. A. R.



In Broadway Playhouses

By Dorothy Parker

Advance Models in Summer Shows

IT is a pretty thing to see the theatrical managers' immediate response to the annual urge of approaching summer. It gives new vigor to one's drooping faith in romance and poesy and the young man's fancy, and all those things. Too rarely, in the tawdry sophistication of modern life, does one find anything so spontaneous, so fresh, so artless. It is like a ray of pale sunshine amid the white glare of Broadway, like a spray of cool maiden-hair among a corsage of forced orchids.

For there is a certain ineffable something about the summertime that goes directly to the exquisitely barbered heads of the managers. The merest hint of it is enough. The sight of a premature Palm Beach suit, the sound of a venturesome hand organ, the scent of last winter's camphor arising from an early white-fox fur—any one of these suffices to start them on their giddy course. They cast aside their serious productions along with their mink-lined overcoats, and, to a joyous fanfare of press notices, they trip blithely along in a whirl of musical comedies. The leading temples of the drama are lavishly given over to jazz, woman, and song. Neglected entirely is the lofty-browed trade. All is arranged with a view to making it a bigger and better season than ever for the visting buyers.

This year, the managers let themselves go at an unusually early date. Scarcely had March been unregrettingly torn from the calendar and April begun to laugh her golden laughter and, the moment after, to blow her girlish tornadoes, when the managers were running wild. Easter was barely allowed to get out of the way before musical comedies were bursting out all over the place. Bleak and wintry though it may have been in the desolate, wind-swept streets, in the theaters it was as if glorious summer had come back once more.

By way of starting the new season off right, up at the Century Theater "Aphrodite" put her wardrobe back in her make-up box and departed, leaving the vast stage to the much-heralded revival of "Florodora." And much-heralded is considerably understating the case. Seldom has an entertainment received such earnest and prolonged attentions from the local press. There was, fortunately, nothing really snappy transpiring in world history—just the usual bit of good-humored rioting in Ireland, and odds and ends of that sort—so that the newspapers could give up most of their columns to "Florodora."

Priceless space was devoted to tender reminiscences of the original production; controversies raged, in the "Letters from Our Readers" columns, as to

the members of the original cast and what later became of them, if anything; while the accounts of the original sextet would, if placed end to end in the approved manner, have extended three times around the entire chain of Shubert theaters. It was a boon to the editors of the Sunday supplements; they had scarcely anything to do but run symbolically illustrated stories relating the lives, to date, of the sextet *artistes*, showing how the girls had more than made good, in the way of matrimony. Certainly, the newspapers did the handsome thing by "Florodora."

The management, too, has laid itself out, both as to cast and presentation. Everything which extremely experienced actors, tirelessly patient directors, and highly blond showgirls could do has been done for the musical-comedy hit of twenty years ago. The only trouble is that it is still just that—the musical-comedy hit of twenty years ago.

There has been an amazingly well-preserved glamour about "Florodora." Perhaps it was a reflection of the radiance shed by those original six, the girls who "put the sex in sextet," as you might say. Anyway, a sort of tradition has grown up around it; it has virtually come to be accepted as the standard for all musical comedy. "Ah," people have been saying, "there are no good musical comedies nowadays. What we want is another 'Florodora!'"

Now that they have their desire, it does seem as if they might have wished for something really striking while they were at it. Indeed, to a casual observer, the reason for all the protracted raving of the past two decades seems to be enveloped in a dense fog. It is, undoubtedly, a pretty low trick to go about breaking up a lot of poor old traditions, yet it is practically impossible to keep from blurting out that "Florodora" seems uneventful and tenuous, and stretched out to the snapping point, over its two long acts. Having uttered this

and still escaped instant destruction by a specially designed thunderbolt, one is emboldened to throw off all restraint and recklessly announce that, barring "Tell Me, Pretty Maiden," the music doesn't seem to be so epoch-making, either; while, not barring "Tell Me, Pretty Maiden," it is putting it mildly to say that the lyrics are no more than average.

It was a bad moment for the "Florodora" enthusiasts when they discovered that the piece is far more glowing in the memory than it is in revival. It is the first sign of onrushing age when one realizes that things no longer look as good as they used to. Personally, I grew quite worked up about my vanished youth when the "Hello, People" number was sung. When I first heard it in "Havana" ten years or so ago, I felt that I might just as well pass on then and there, if the authorities could arrange it; I had known all that earth could give of lyrical and musical beauty. And when I heard it again the other night up at the Century—the management has lifted it into the "Florodora" score, thinking that it was all among friends, anyway—it left me cold and unmoved. Well, we can't be young always.

But all this complaining is not done with an eye to discouraging you. "Florodora" is worth its admission price, not only for old times' sake, but for the opportunity it affords of hearing Eleanor Painter sing and of seeing her dance, and of observing George Hassell get more laughs than nature ever intended from the scant material provided him by the book. The production marks the return to the stage of Christie Macdonald, and the appearance of Margot Kelly, first seen hereabouts in the wordless play. "Pierrot, the Prodigal." To hear Miss Kelly's singing voice is more fully to understand her great success in pantomime.

The sextet is given the most lavish attentions, which, of course, is no more

than natural. It is sung for the first forty or fifty times by the six much-photographed showgirls and their attendant chorus men. It does seem unfortunate, by the way, that the girls' costumes are not more charming of color and design than are the somewhat characterless lavender and white gowns selected. Then it is done by a line-up of girls in costumes like those worn by the original sextet; and it is finally performed, for an incalculable number of times, by a sextet of stage children. I expected that it would next be done by a troupe of trained seals, but, on the night that I was present, at any rate, they were not forthcoming. Possibly another encore would have brought them out.

At the time of crashing to press, none of the present sextet has gone out for the record set by their predecessors of the first production—not so that their efforts have reached the newspapers, at any rate. However, there is still plenty of time; it is but the shank of the season. Certainly we wish the girls all the luck in the world.

All good wishes and the season's greetings are also due Ed Wynn, now firmly established at the New Amsterdam Theater, under his own management, in his own entertainment, known as "Ed Wynn's Carnival"—which is as good a title as they could have found, when you come right down to it. The "Carnival" is exclusively a one-man show; Mr. Wynn not only serves as the life of the entire party, but he is the author of the dialogue and most of the songs, both words and music—and, as he points out with logical pride in his foreword, he is not yet thirty-five years of age. Mr. Wynn confesses that, as a lyricist, his greatest difficulty lay in finding a rhyme for the word "orange." Surely any such obstacle as this would have been forever overcome by the lyrical dexterity of one Grant Clarke, who supplies the words for several of the interpolated songs. In one short chorus,

he not only performs the spectacular maneuver of rhyming "little" with "fiddle," but, without the slightest perceptible effort, he accomplishes the truly superb feat of employing "nothing" as a rhyme to "bluffing." Mr. Clarke will assuredly go far. This song alone makes him a contender to be reckoned with in the hot contest for the richly beribboned brown derby, to be awarded as a trophy to the year's most ingenious popular-song writer.

Were it not for Mr. Wynn's presence in the show, it is greatly to be feared that all his honest labor as author and composer would have gone for little or nothing. The carnival part is just one more of those things—you know, a Japanese garden scene, with pink, blooming cherry trees against an abnormally blue sky; a scene showing the quaint little white cottage in the old-fashioned garden; a scene in which a bachelor sits dreaming by the fireside, while living pictures of his old loves appear in the red-chiffon flames; and a desert scene, of course, with the good old Sphinx on the backdrop. A song about Bagdad is somewhat irrelevantly introduced in this last interlude—the management probably thought that anything lying in a general easterly direction might just as well be worked in.

But all this means virtually nothing in the lives of the New Amsterdam audiences. Ed Wynn is, fortunately, on the stage for seven-eighths of the time, at the lowest possible computation, so the "Carnival" is by far the funniest thing that has been developed by the musical-comedy industry thus far in the season.

Mr. Wynn takes the deepest personal interest in his production. He watches over it with an almost maternal solicitude. Even in those scenes in which he has no active part, he putters about the stage, arranging the showgirls' dresses, supervising movements of the curtain, calling the attention of the audience to

the fine points of scenery and performance. Aside from an unusually clever Japanese trio and a remarkable team of acrobats, called Regal and Moore, Mr. Wynn has done but little for himself in the way of support. That, again, doesn't matter in the least. He carries off the whole show, from his initial entrance to the very end, when he stands in the foyer, asking the outgoing audiences if they liked the "Carnival," and he has yet to take "no" for an answer.

It is a far cry from the "Carnival" to "Three Showers," the first musical-comedy production sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Coburn. The piece started out at the Harris, but has since moved to the Plymouth, left empty when John Barrymore's illness brought about the closing of "Richard III." "Three Showers" gets its title from a superstition that a wish made on a day when three showers fall will surely be granted. I wished, early in the evening, that the show would be over by nine o'clock, but it didn't come true; so that's all there is to that.

The comedy, written by William Cary Duncan, with occasional songs by Creamer and Lytton, has its scene laid in the South. In the first act, the proud old Southern gentleman, in the conventional white, tells the heroine: "I wanted yo' to be a boy, honey, so I could name yo' fo' the finest gentleman who evah lived—Cunnel Robert E. Lee," at which the audience, the major part of whom have never been ten blocks farther south than the Temple Emanuel, bursts into hysterical applause. In the second act, all the members of the cast appear in old-time Southern costumes. The author thoughtfully introduces a fancy-dress ball, solely on this account.

Anna Wheaton strives nobly with the heroine's rôle, but it is a thankless task.

The best thing about the entertainment is the singing of a negro quartet, to which I would gladly have been listen-

ing yet, if the author had not cut in on it with things less interesting.

Brighter things by far are in store for the visitor to the New Amsterdam roof, where the "Nine O'Clock Frolic" and the "Midnight Frolic" nightly transpire. It speaks much for Mr. Ziegfeld's art that his roof entertainments seem as good on these sarsaparilla-saddened nights as they did back in those golden times when one could still obtain one's heart's desire, if one knew the waiter, or in those only slightly less golden times, of flasks on the hip.

Where the Ziegfeld girls come from will always be one of the world's great mysteries; certainly, one never sees any like them anywhere around. The line-up in the last "Frolic" shows that Mr. Ziegfeld's eye is as unerring as ever. He has not relied entirely upon home talent for these new shows; there are importations from Paris and London, respectively, in the persons of Made-moiselle Spinelly and of Kathleen Martyn, both of whom do much to strengthen the good feeling between the United States and her leading Allies. The comedy part of the proceedings is mostly intrusted to the competent care of W. C. Fields, the delightful little Mary Hay, and Fannie Brice. Many of the songs are delivered by Lilian Lorraine, who raises the "Frolic's" standard of pulchritude even higher, but who brings the vocal average down to about minus seventeen.

By way of keeping in touch with our new national sport, the "Nine O'Clock Frolic" features a ouija-board song, in which a giant planchette moves over a colossal ouija board, spelling out answers to questions asked by the audience. On the night that I was present, it prophesied that Governor Edwards would be the next president; announced, in answer to a question regarding William Jennings Bryan's whereabouts, that he was in the soup; and proclaimed Roosevelt as the greatest American who

ever lived. Surely Clayton Lusk himself would have been satisfied with the two-hundred-per-cent Americanism of the unseen being who controlled the movements.

Speaking of ouija boards—and who isn't, these days?—brings us naturally to the unmusical success, "The Ouija Board," by Crane Wilbur, till lately one of our most inveterate movie heroes. He has written an always entertaining and sometimes decidedly thrilling melodrama of mediums and crooks and unexpected spirits. It is a collection of

utterly impossible happenings, but why worry about that, when it is so amusing? It is distinguished by Howard Lang's effective acting of the medium's rôle, and by the expected excellence of George Gaul's performance. Mr. Wilbur appears himself in a surprisingly modest part for an author to play.

"The Ouija Board" is easily the best psychic-crook melodrama since "The Thirteenth Chair." Curious, isn't it, that plays dealing with mediums are inevitably crook plays? Still, perhaps it's a natural train of thought.



LOST GLORY

I SLEPT, and in my dreams I seemed to stand
 Amid the splendors of a far-off land;
 Tall palm trees swayed above me, down below
 Were bright-decked barges, plying to and fro
 Between the hundred gates that pierced the wall:
 A thousand slaves would answer at my call,
 I was the queen, my glory could not fade—
 To please my whim those gardens had been made.

I woke and searched my books. Page after page
 I found that told of that forgotten age,
 Of walls and bridges, temples glistening white,
 Where shining Marduk sat in golden light;
 The great king's madness, when on herbs and grain
 He fed, like some poor beast, in sun and rain.
 But in the epic of my city's fame,
 No mention could I find of that queen's name.

HELBA BAKER.

Talks With Ainslee's Readers

YOU have heard a good deal about the international marriage. It has been a favorite theme with writers of fiction. With deadly monotony, a titled, but penniless European is depicted as a fortune hunter. He comes to America, places a coronet—for a consideration—on the brow of some American girl, and immediately proceeds to neglect her shamefully. Of course, this has happened frequently in real life. But few stories have given the reverse of the shield—the American girl in Europe on the trail of a title or a fortune. Gertrude Brooke Hamilton approaches the subject from a novel angle in her complete novelette, "The Safety Match," which will be featured in the next issue of AINSLEE'S. Her heroine, Sandra Lorikeet, comes of a good family with "not quite enough money to keep up the Lorikeet home in a semi-fashionable block of Manhattan, yet sufficient for travel, with good management and, perhaps, a little social grafting now and then." Sandra 'is a beauty and a worldling. She has an honest American suitor, for whom she has begun to care; but her older sister, Fan, does not consider him enough of a *parti* and whisks her away to Europe to make a dazzling match. The adventures which befall them are both entertaining and instructive. The way of the fortune hunter is a difficult one, if we are to believe the author. But do not suppose that this novelette is a mere homily. It is rattling good narrative from start to finish. We refrain from telling you how the plot is worked out; but doesn't the title pique your curiosity: "The Safety Match?"

SOLITA SOLANO, who became an AINSLEE'S contributor a few numbers back, will have a brilliant short story in the August issue. It is called "Oil and Water," and tells how "Nina," a highly sophisticated Spanish woman, comes to New York and becomes engaged to one Alexander. They have a lovely time getting to understand each other. Really, it is far from banal. Miss Solano has had a colorful career. As a young girl, she spent four years in the Orient. She has done every kind of writing, from newspaper reporting and publicity articles, to moving-picture scenarios and clever fiction. She has been a dramatic critic in Boston and later in New York. A facile linguist, she writes in Spanish as well as in English.

ANOTHER long installment of our serial, "His Wife," by Pauline Brooks, will appear next month. This novel has already won favorable comments for its dramatic situations and unusual handling of a strange psychological problem. Feature short stories include "The Camel's Back," by Olga Petrova, the great actress, whose fiction and verse have been delighting AINSLEE'S readers; "Snake in the Grass," by Bonnie Ginger; "Woodland Magic," by Elmer Brown Mason; and "Sweets to the Sweet," by Robert W. Sneddon. Steven Trayle, the picturesque philanderer in Paul Hervey Fox's series, will dally through another romance; and Anice Terhune will tell the extraordinary story of the superwoman, "Vlasta," last of the Amazons. There will be a piquant review of the current plays by Dorothy Parker.



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The country needs thousands of trained, **Certificated Electricians** to fill good positions—and at big pay. It's all a matter knowing how, and I will teach you by my up-to-date, modern instruction. You can learn at home, without interfering with your regular work, by my highly successful method of **Home Instruction in Practical Electricity**. Prepare NOW, and be ready in a few months to earn your

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To every student who answers this ad I am giving a **Splendid Electrical Outfit** of standard size, Electrical Tools, Instruments, Materials, etc., **absolutely free**. Furthermore, to every Electrical Student I give a truly **valuable surprise** that I cannot explain here.

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Chicago, Ill.

Sir: Send at once—fully prepaid and entirely free—complete particulars of your great offer for this month.

USE THIS "FREE OUTFIT" COUPON
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The Most Remarkable Story of Our Time

Around the World in Eighty Hours



By WILLIAM WALLACE COOK

Opening Chapters in the July 15th Issue of

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To be obtained for a little while wherever magazines are sold.
Fifteen cents a copy. It is a brisk seller.

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If it isn't an Eastman, it isn't a Kodak.

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Into the hotel lobby walked a beautiful woman and a distinguished man. Little indeed did the gay and gallant crowd know that around these heads there flew stories of terror—of murder—and treason. That on their entrance, half a dozen detectives sprang up from different parts of the place. Because of them the lights of the War Department in Washington blazed far into the night. With their fate was wound the tragedy of a broken marriage, of a fortune lost, of a nation betrayed.

It is a wonderful story with the kind of mystery that you will sit up nights trying to fathom. It is just one of the stories fashioned by that master of mystery

CRAIG KENNEDY
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He is the detective genius of our age. He has taken science—science that stands for this age, and allied it to the mystery and romance of detective fiction. Even to the smallest detail, every bit of the plot is worked out scientifically. For nearly ten years, America has been watching his Craig Kennedy—marvelling at the strange, new, startling things that detective hero would unfold. Such plots—such suspense—with real vivid people moving through the maelstrom of life!

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Tubes Guaranteed Fresh Stock

Size	Tires	Tubes	Size	Tires	Tubes
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32x3 1/2	7.00	2.00	35x4 1/2	11.50	2.20
31x4	8.00	2.25	35x5	12.00	2.30
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Send \$2.00 deposit for each tire ordered, balance C. O. D. Tires shipped subject to your examination. State whether S. E. C. plain or non-skid is desired. All prices. By sending full amount of order you can save 5 per cent—our special mail-with-order discount.

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See the money saving diamond bargains which the Basch house of Basch still offers in this book, in spite of rising prices of diamonds at \$45.00, 5-6 carat at \$75.00. Free examination. Money back guarantee.

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The Gloves of a Thousand Uses

RAILROADERS, teamsters, builders, motormen, farmers, packers, movers, janitors, linemen, deck-hands, plasterers, street cleaners, gardeners, ash collectors, stone masons, pilots, painters, truck drivers, lumbermen,

—ironworkers, pavers, bricklayers, carpenters, stokers, machinists, foundrymen, everyone, man, woman or child, who does any hand work of any kind should wear Boss Work Gloves. They protect from dust, dirt, grease, paint, and minor injuries. They are economically priced to suit every purse.

Boss Work Gloves are heavy and tough enough to wear well through the hardest kind of usage—yet they are flexible enough to permit a thorough “feel” of the work in hand.

They are easy to slip on and off.

And they come in different weights adaptable to every conceivable requirement with band, ribbed, or gauntlet wrists. Sizes for men and women, boys and girls.

Ask your dealer for a pair of these Gloves of a Thousand Uses. Look over the four best sellers listed below:

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THE BOSS WALLOPER—This is the super work glove. Strong, flexible and built for rugged work. Made of the highest quality, heaviest weight cotton flannel.

The Boss line includes highest quality leather-palm, jersey, ticking, and cotton flannel gloves and mittens.

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COWAN Master Barber HAIR CUTTER

Adjusted for any length and for finishing around the ears and neck.

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30 Day Trial Offer—Just use your razor and scissors right now and we'll tell you how you can use the Cowan Hair Cutter 30 days without charge to you. You'll be mighty glad to keep it because you'll save the price of it before the 30 days are up.

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Dept. 90

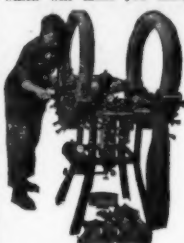
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We make the Anderson steam vulcanizer and son retroader and the famous Anderson of Vulcanizing. Our clients make good money they can do superior work with the Anderson steam and method and do it at one-tenth the cost by all other vulcanizing methods. Satisfied customers and large profits paying business. Not are we able to continue on of this, but we invite you compare the Anderson method with others.

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and let me see what you can do with it. Many newspaper artists earning \$30.00 to \$125.00 or more per week were trained by my course of personal individual lessons by mail. **PICTURE CHARTS** make original drawings easy to learn. Send sketch of Uncle Sam with 6c in stamps for sample Picture Chart, list of successful students, examples of their work and evidence of what YOU can accomplish. Please state your age.



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Young man, are you mechanically inclined? Come to the Sweeney School. Learn to be an expert. I teach with tools not books. Do the work yourself, that's the secret of the



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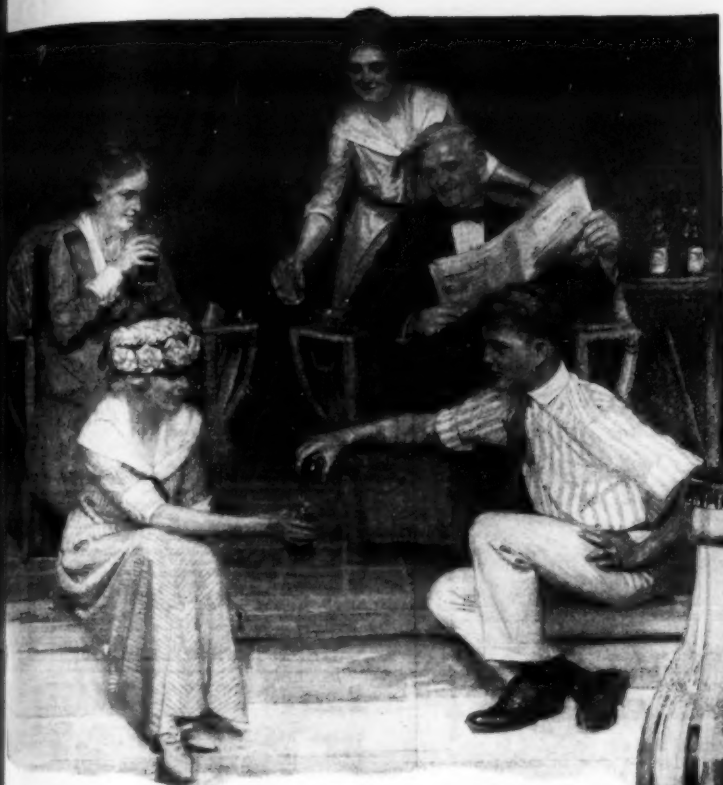
of practical training by which 5,000 soldiers were trained for U. S. Government and over 20,000 expert mechanics. Learn in a few weeks; no previous experience necessary.

FREE Write today for illustrated free catalog showing hundreds of pictures of men working in new Million Dollar Trade School.

LEARN A TRADE Sweeney!

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Nothing goes into Hires but the pure healthful juices of roots, barks, herbs, berries—and pure cane sugar. The quality of Hires is maintained in spite of tremendously increased costs of ingredients. Yet you pay no more for Hires than you do for an artificial imitation.

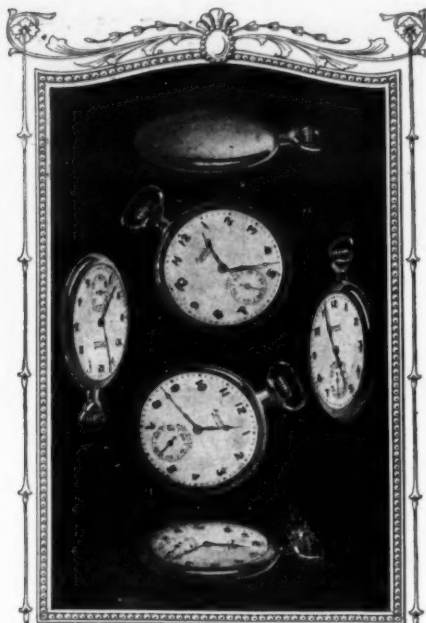
But be sure you ask your dealer for "Hires" just as you say "Hires" at a soda fountain.

THE CHARLES E. HIRES COMPANY, PHILADELPHIA

Hires contains juices of 16 roots, barks, herbs and berries

Hires *in bottles*

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EVERY Ingersoll Reliance is tested in six positions—12 days—2 days in each position—before it leaves the factory. These positions are illustrated above.

This test follows the 127 inspections that are made before the movement is completely assembled. Together they assure accuracy and reliability under all conditions.

The Reliance movement is 7-jewel and of the solid or "bridge" type of construction as employed in the Jurgenson and other fine watches.

Yet you can buy the Reliance in a solid nickel screw case for just \$8.00, or in a gold filled case for \$11.50. Canadian prices: In nickel case \$8.75. In gold filled \$13.00.

Let the dealer show you. Look for the store with the Ingersoll display.

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It's filled with solid facts about the value of high grade Diamonds, Watches and Jewelry that will double the purchasing power of your purse.

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A wholesale jewelry house in a nutshell; goods at prices minus middlemen's profits. Get a copy NOW; it is FREE; learn how to open a charge account and pay monthly or weekly, if you like. Liberty Bonds accepted. Ask for Edition 140.

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Jung's Arch Brace, just out, is an elastic, light, comfortable, economical and corrective brace. Relieves tired and aching feet instantly. Corrects fallen arches and foot-strain. Strengthens and supports muscles. No metal plates. Made of specially prepared "Superlaxit". Recommended by physicians. Guaranteed. Price \$1.00 per pair. Money back if not satisfied. Order today. Booklet free. Ask your shoe dealer or druggist.

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116-inch Wheel Base 152-inch Spring Suspension

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To drive and demonstrate 1920, 4-cyl., 37 H. P. BUSH Open-Top Touring—Willard Motor Co. 2 Unit Six, 4 Lbs.—Full Power Axel. Write at once for the best Automobile Offer in existence—don't wait—prompt shipments. Money-back guarantee.

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6000 Mile Guarantee

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Refinner Free With Every Tire

State whether you want straight side or clincher, plain or non-skid. Send \$2 deposit for each tire ordered. Balance C.O.D., subject to examination, or 5 percent discount if full amount is sent with order.

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"Sew-Ons"

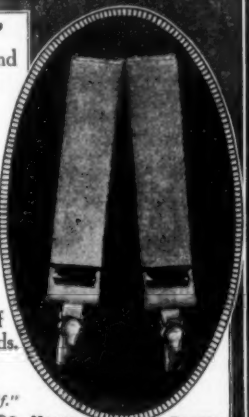
can be quickly and easily attached to any style of corset.

The unique VELVET GRIP feature of the "Sew-On" — an all-rubber, oblong button — is proof against "rips" and the ruthless ripping of silken hose threads.

Look for the Oblong Rubber Button — "The Button that Talks for Itself."

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Harold Lachman Co., 22 N. Michigan Ave., Dept. A170 Chicago



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Explain, without obligating me, how I can qualify for the position, or in the subject, before which I mark X.

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Sweet's Capital \$1,000,000

L. W. SWEET, Inc., 1650-1660 Broadway, New York City

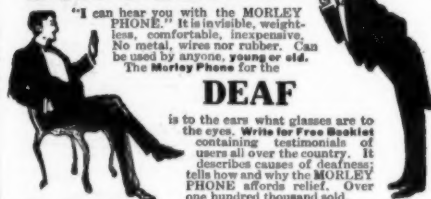


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A toilet preparation of merit. Helps to eradicate dandruff. For Restoring Color and Beauty to Gray and Faded Hair. 50c. and \$1.00 at druggists.

HINDER CORNS Removes Corns, Callouses, etc., stops all pain, ensures comfort to the feet, makes walking easy. 15 cents by mail or at Druggists. Hiseox Chemical Works, Patchogue, N. Y.

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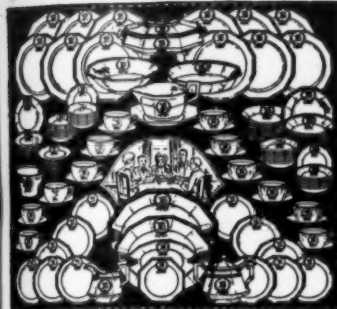
WE have striven very conscientiously to give you an honest, clean-cut, interesting magazine. If you think that our effort has been successful, will you not help a good thing along by telling your friends where good fiction of uniform quality may be found?

By doing so you will favor your friends as well as the publishers.

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SEND IN YOUR

Select Any One of These Articles and Send Only One Dollar



Golden Martha Dinner Set 110 Pieces

The exquisite beauty of this wonderful Golden Martha Washington Dinner Set cannot be appreciated until you see the gleams of burnished gold comprising the heavy decoration, and the snowy whiteness of each piece where it glitters through the heavy bands of rich gold and the wreath with your initial monogram also in gold. You must see the distinctive shape—the many and varied artistic indentations—which make this pattern so different from all others. A faithful reproduction of the most expensive dinner set made.

With Your Initial Monogram in Gold. We send complete for 30 days' use in your home. Send only \$1 now. If not satisfied, return in 30 days and we will return your \$1 and pay transportation both ways. If you keep them, pay balance in easy monthly payments as stated below. Each piece is fire glazed—guaranteed not to check or craze. Be sure to give initial desired—see coupon. Order by No. 337BMA18. Price of complete set of 110 pieces, \$238.95. Send \$1.00 with coupon. Balance \$2.75 per month.

Complete Set Consists of: 12 dinner plates, 9 in.; 12 breakfast plates, 7 in.; 12 soup plates, 7 1/2 in.; 12 cups; 12 saucers; 12 cereal dishes, 6 in.; 12 individual brock and butter plates, 6 1/2 in.; 12 sauce dishes; 1 platter, 18 1/4 in.; 1 platter, 11 1/4 in.; 1 celery dish, 8 1/2 in.; 1 sauce boat tray, 7 1/2 in.; 1 butter plate, 6 1/2 in.; 1 vegetable dish, 10 1/2 in., with lid (pieces); 1 deep bowl, 8 1/2 in.; 1 shallow bowl, 9 in.; 1 small deep bowl, 6 in.; 1 fruit bowl, 7 1/2 in.; 1 creamer; 1 sugar bowl with cover (2 pieces). Shipped from Chicago warehouse. Shipping weight about 30 lbs.

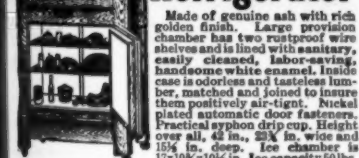
42-Piece Aluminum Set

Think what these up-to-date utensils—one for each kitchen purpose—will mean in greater ease of cooking—added satisfaction and pride you will take in supplanting your hard-to-clean, old-fashioned kitchenware with this sanitary, fuel-saving, easy-to-use like set. How can any woman resist this sensational offer—greatest ever made in aluminum kitchenware!

Remarkable Complete Outfit One dollar brings this 42-piece aluminum set for a practical test. If you don't find it all we claim return it after 30 days' use and we will refund your \$1 and pay transportation both ways. Made from heavy gauge pressed steel aluminum. Absolutely rustless. Will not corrode, chip or peel. Set consists of: Nine-piece combination double roaster with 2 outer shells; inside pudding pan; 5 custard cups with perforated tin holder. (Two outer shells make an excellent roaster for chickens, steaks and other meats. Using perforated inner and small pudding pan, it is a combination cake and steamer. The 3 pans are also used separately over the fire as a cake pan, hot dish, pudding pan or for any purpose where open pans are used.) 7-cup coffee percolator with inner (2 pieces); 6-quart preserving kettle; 3 bread pans; 5 pie plates, 8- and 9-in. lipped sauce pans; 1 ladle; 2 jelly cake pans, with loose bottoms (4 pieces); 1 meat set; salt and pepper shakers; tooth pick holder and frame (4 pieces); 1 measuring cup; 1 combination funnel (6 pieces); 1 measuring spoon; 1 strainer; 1 sugar shaker; 1 grater; 1 cake turner; 1 lemon juice extractor. Shipping weight, about 10 lbs. Shipped from Chicago warehouse. Order by No. 415BMA16. Price, complete set of 42 pieces, \$14.80. Send \$1 now. Balance \$1.50 monthly.



White Enamel Lined Golden Finish Oak; Lift Lid Refrigerator



Made of genuine ash with rich golden finish. Large provision chamber has two rustproof wire shelves and is lined with sanitary, easily cleaned, labor-saving, handsome white enamel. Inside case is odorless and tasteless lumber, matched and joined to insure them positively air-tight. Nickel plated automatic door fastener. Practical syphon drip cup. Height over all, 42 in., 23 1/2 in. wide and 15 1/2 in. deep. Ice chamber is 12x10x21 1/4 in. Ice capacity 50 lbs. Provision compartment is 19 1/2x15 1/2x14 in. We send it for only \$1 down. Keep it 30 days. If not delighted, return it and we refund your money and pay transportation both ways. If you keep it, pay balance in small easy payments. Order No. 339BMA36. Price \$20.95. Send \$1 now. Balance \$2.25 monthly.

Round Fibre Reed Gray or Natural Fibre Pullman Sleeper

Made of full round fibre reed woven over steel stakes, and not the ordinary flat reed usually used in carriages at this price. Made in either beautiful gray with gray gear or natural finish with black gear. Has Bedford cord rear windshield and Bedford cord upholstery. Gear is stationary type, tubular construction, 4 in. in diameter. Steel wheels measure 14 in. in diameter and fitted with 3/4-inch rubber tires and nickel plated hub caps. Inside width, 14 inches. Easy riding springs; excellent, comfortable upholstery. Shipping weight, about 75 lbs.



Order Natural by number 337BMA18. Price of Natural \$29.55. Order Gray by number 337BMA19. Price of Gray \$29.95. Send \$1 now for either color. Balance \$2.75 monthly.

Use this carriage 30 days. If not satisfied, return it and we will refund your money. If you keep it, pay balance on our easy payment plan.

HARTMAN Furniture & Carpet Co.

3913 Wentworth Ave., Dept. 2617 Chicago

Free Bargain Catalog

Be sure and get this great catalog. Thousands of bargains in furniture, carpets, rugs, stoves, phonographs, sewing machines, kitchenware, farm equipment, silverware, jewelry, etc.—all on Hartman's easy credit terms. Send postal today.

HARTMAN FURNITURE & CARPET CO.

3913 Wentworth Ave., Dept. 2617 Chicago



- ☐ 42-Piece Aluminum Set, No. 415BMA16. Price \$14.80. \$1 down. \$1.50 monthly.
- ☐ Refrigerator, No. 339BMA36. Price \$20.95. \$1 down. \$2.25 monthly.
- ☐ 110-Piece Dinner Set, No. 337BMA18. Price \$238.95. \$1 down. \$2.75 monthly.
- ☐ Baby Carriage, Natural, No. 337BMA18. Price \$29.55. \$1 down. \$2.75 monthly.
- ☐ Baby Carriage, Gray, No. 337BMA19. Price \$29.95. \$1 down. \$2.75 monthly.

Send FREE Hartman Bargain Book. Initial Here

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Occupation..... State.....

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Training in the art of forceful, effective speech for Ministers, Salesmen, Fraternal Leaders, Politicians, Chloans, etc.
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Colds and La Grippe

Women's Aches and Ills
Rheumatic and Sciatic Pains

Ask Your Druggist for A-K Tablets
(If he cannot supply you, write us)

Small Size
10c



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See Monogram **A-K** on the Genuine
The Antikamnia Remedy Company, St. Louis, Mo.
Write for Free Samples

FREE



\$20
TENOR BANJO Ukulele, Hawaiian Guitar, Violin, Mandolin, Guitar, Cornet or Banjo

Wonderful new system of teaching notes made by mail. Ten pupils in each locality, we give a \$30 superb Violin, Mandolin, Ukulele, Guitar, Hawaiian Guitar, Cornet, Tenor Banjo or Banjo absolutely free. Very small charge for lessons only. We guarantee success or no charge. Complete outfit free. Write now. No obligation. **SLINGERLAND SCHOOL OF MUSIC, Inc. Dept. 35 CHICAGO, ILL.**



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What every young man and

Every young woman should know

What every young husband and

Every young wife should know

What every parent should know

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AMERICAN PUB. CO., 664 Winston Bldg., Philadelphia

Nine Months to Pay

Immediate possession on our liberal easy

Monthly Payment plan—the most liberal terms

ever offered on a high grade bicycle.

Many parents advance the first payment

and energetic boys by odd jobs—paper routes,

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earn money to meet the small payments.

FACTORY TO RIDER prices save you money.

We make our bicycles in our own new model

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Send for big, beautiful catalog.

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DAYS TRIAL. Select the bicycle you want and

terms that suit you—cash or easy payments. Write to-

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MEAD CYCLE COMPANY
Dept. M4 Chicago



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"I certainly like the comfort of a soft collar, but—it looks so sloppy."

"Not necessarily! Look at mine. I wear the

Hol-Tite

PAT. FEB. 18, 1916

COLLAR HOLDER

Holds Tight But Makes No Holes

YOUR comfortable soft collars need no longer worry you with their untidy lines and slovenly fit. An inconspicuous Hol-Tite makes any soft collar as natty and well-fitting as a stiff one.

Preserves the comfort—adds the well-dressed appearance every man desires.

*Haberdashers and Jewelers
Supply the Hol-Tite
Priced from 50 cents to \$5.00*

HOLD TIGHT COLLAR HOLDER CO., 950 B'WAY, NEW YORK

Hol-Tite PAT. FEB. 18, 1916 **COLLAR HOLDER**

INCONSPICUOUS
When worn, but holds the soft collar in firm graceful lines. The grip will not shake loose, and there are no prongs, pins or sharp edges to wear or puncture the collar.

Insist upon getting the genuine "Hol-Tite."

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**A snap
to button**

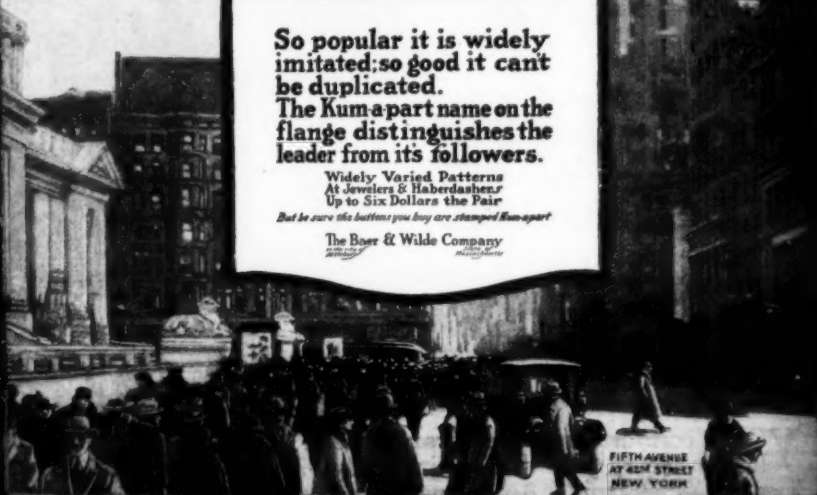


TRADE MARK
FIG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

**So popular it is widely
imitated; so good it can't
be duplicated.
The Kum-a-part name on the
flange distinguishes the
leader from its followers.**

*Widely Varied Patterns
At Jewelers & Haberdashers
Up to Six Dollars the Pair
But be sure the buttons you buy are stamped Kum-a-part*

The Boer & Wilde Company
NEW YORK



FIFTH AVENUE
AT 42ND STREET
NEW YORK

BUTTONS THE CUFFS OF THE NATION

**KUM-A-PART
CUFF BUTTON**

THE ORIGINAL SEPARABLE BUTTON FOR SOFT CUFFS

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There's no two ways about it!

No better cigarette can be made than Camels!

GET the idea at once that Camels and their refreshing flavor are unlike any cigarette you ever smoked—that's why men call Camels a cigarette revelation!

You should know why Camels are so unusual, so delightful, so satisfying. *First*, quality—*second*, Camels expert blend of choice Turkish and choice Domestic tobaccos, and you'll certainly prefer Camels blend to either kind of tobacco smoked straight!

Camels blend makes possible that wonderful mellow mildness you hear so much about—yet the desirable body is there to any smoker's absolute satisfaction! *Yet, Camels never tire your taste!*

How you'll appreciate, too, Camels freedom from any unpleasant cigarette aftertaste or unpleasant cigarette odor—a *cigarette revelation all by itself.*

Pick Camels for trial and compare them puff-by-puff with any cigarette in the world at any price!

Camels are sold everywhere in scientifically sealed packages of 20 cigarettes for 20 cents; or ten packages (200 cigarettes) in a glassine-paper-covered carton. We strongly recommend this carton for the home or office supply or when you travel.

R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Co.
Winston-Salem, N. C.

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*This is the sign that identifies
dealers showing the Eveready
Daylo \$10,000 Contest
Picture. Look for this
sign on dealers
windows*

Three Thousand Dollars For Somebody. YOU?

THREE thousand dollars in cash for one person; a thousand dollars for another; five hundred for each of three other people and ninety-nine other cash prizes two hundred to ten dollars. *Ten thousand dollars* in all! How much for YOU?

This latest Eveready Daylo Contest will break all contest records. Anyone may enter—it costs nothing; there is no obligation of any kind. Men, women, boys and girls all have equal chances for any of the 104 cash prizes.

On June 1st, Daylo dealers throughout the United States and Canada will display the new Daylo contest Picture in their windows. Go to the store of a Daylo dealer and study the picture. Secure a contest blank, which the dealer will give you, and write on it what you think the letter says. Use 12 words or less. For the best answer that conforms to the contest rules, the winner will receive \$3000.00 in cash.

Get an early look at the picture. Submit as many answers as you wish. Contest blanks are free at all Daylo dealers. All answers must be mailed before midnight, August 1st, 1920.

A3114



1 First Prize	\$3000.00
1 Second Prize	1000.00
3 Prizes—\$500.00 each	1500.00
4 Prizes—\$250.00 each	1000.00
5 Prizes—\$200.00 each	1000.00
10 Prizes—\$100.00 each	1000.00
10 Prizes—\$ 50.00 each	500.00
20 Prizes—\$ 25.00 each	500.00
50 Prizes—\$ 10.00 each	500.00

104 Prizes Total \$10,000.00

Answers will be judged by the editors of "LIFE" and contestants must abide by their judgment.

If two or more contestants submit the identical answer selected by the judges for any prize, the full amount of the prize will be paid to each.

Contest begins June 1, 1920, and ends Midnight, August 1, 1920. Postmarks on letters will determine if letter has been mailed before close of contest.

Answers must contain not more than 12 words. Hyphenated words count as one word.

Complete Contest Rules are printed on Contest Blank. Ask Daylo dealers for them.



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